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**Football, Femininity and Muscle:
An Exploration of Heteronormative and Athletic Discourses
in the Lives of Elite-Level Women Footballers in South Africa**

by

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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ABSTRACT

Normalised constructions of masculinity and femininity within a heteronormative social structure have shaped beliefs about women's capacities, characteristics and bodies, and have constructed a hegemonic feminine ideal that has historically excluded the possibility of being simultaneously feminine and athletic. However, following developments in Europe and North America (such as Title IV and WIS) and the increased production and consumption of globalised sports, new and more athletic feminine ideals have emerged and opened spaces for women to form sporting and athletic subjectivities.

As a part of this process, women's football, across the world, has grown exponentially, in popular support and participation rates, since the first World Cup was organised in China in 1991 (Hong, 2004; Cox and Thompson, 2000). In South Africa, the development of structures for women's football was late, and women's football is not yet fully professional. In South Africa football is viewed as a game for men, and it remains a flagship masculine sport that serves to maintain and support masculine domination (Pelak, 2005). Because women's participation in a sport like football is considered a transgression, there is a heightened need to mark women's bodies as feminine, so as to reinforce the heteronormative and dichotomous constructions of male/female and masculine/feminine.

This thesis presents an exploration of the ambivalent relationship between empowerment and surveillance as it presents itself in the lives of elite-level women footballers in South Africa. It discusses empowerment and surveillance as they appear at the most intimate levels of women's sporting experience, and impact on the ways in which women footballers discipline and regulate their bodies within the expectations of heteronormativity, femininity and athleticism. The discussion is based on qualitative, informal interviews with 18 elite-level women footballers in South Africa, 12 of which are currently members of the

senior women's national football team, Banyana Banyana. The remaining 6 participants are members of one of Cape Town's oldest and most successful women's football teams. The interviews took place at a national team camp in Pretoria in October 2008, and in Cape Town between August and November 2008.

Utilising discourse analysis and postmodern feminist standpoint theory this thesis concludes that the empowerment and transformation sport has the potential to offer women should not be assumed to follow directly from participation. Women's access to sports participation and sporting subjectivities is stratified, and a complex and ambivalent relationship exists between empowerment and surveillance. This tense relationship between is particularly evident in analyses of gender/race/class intersections, heteronormativity and through examining women's participation at a professional level. Although the neo-liberal feminine athletic validates sporting subjectivities and offers women in elite-level South African football an arena for physical expression and freedom, this empowerment is deeply embedded within the regulatory schemes produced through constructions of a heteronormative feminine aesthetic.

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INTRODUCING FOOTBALL, FEMININITY AND MUSCLE

“Gender emerges at the intersection of the physical and the social, and this is precisely where sport also resides” (Saavedra, 2005:124).

Sport is a social institution that perpetuates the gendered ideologies in wider society through appealing to discourses of the naturalness of men’s privilege and domination in society. Because men tend to outperform women in competitions involving tests of strength and endurance *“men can maintain the illusion of athletic superiority by naming these attributes as bona fide requirements of the ideal athlete”*(Lenskyj, 1990:237). However, sport also offers an arena for challenging the same gendered ideologies; sport is an *“important arena for the disruption of the binary oppositions of masculinity/femininity and the emergence of potentially transgressive forms of sporting femininities”* (Scruton, Fasting, Pfister and Bunuel Heras, 1999:100).

Ideologies of biological differences between women and men are powerful in limiting women’s participation in sports; modern sports exist as an arena for celebrating physical masculinity and sportsmanship, and sportswomen’s achievements continue to be measured against men’s. Notions of ‘natural’ sex differences lies at the heart of most modern competitive sports, one of the most intimately gendered institutions in society. Most competitive sports (with the exception of for example ‘Ultimate Frisbee’) are divided between men’s and women’s sport. Seemingly due to concerns over ‘fair play’ and fair competition, men and women do not compete against each other. This, combined with ideas that equate masculinity with athleticism, has caused a situation in which men’s sports are considered the standard, with women’s sports as ‘the other’ (Pelak, 2006). This is illustrated by the naming of sports tournaments and competitions worldwide. While the Men’s Football World Cup is referred to simply as ‘the World Cup’, the Women’s Football World Cup is referred to as exactly that; ‘the Women’s World Cup’. The distinction between men’s sports and women’s sports legitimises and perpetuates heteronormativity within sports.

This thesis presents an exploration of the ambivalent relationship between empowerment and surveillance as it presents itself in the lives of elite-level women footballers in South Africa. It discusses empowerment and surveillance as they appear at the most intimate levels of women's sporting experience, and impact on the ways in which women footballers discipline and regulate their bodies within the expectations of heteronormativity, femininity and athleticism. This thesis aims to examine the experiences of women footballers in South Africa, through paying specific attention to the unique experiences of elite-level footballers and the intersections of gendered experiences and raced/classed experiences for South African women. The material presented in this thesis is the outcome of interviews and research fieldwork I have undertaken over the course of the past two years, and is grounded in semi-structured informal interviews I performed with 18 elite-level women footballers between August and October 2008. The interviews were performed during a 5-day trip to a training camp for the Senior National women's football team, Banyana Banyana, and through several weeks of engagements with the players in one of Cape Town's oldest and most successful women's football clubs.

Through interviews with elite-level footballers in South Africa, this thesis poses questions as to the empowering potentials of professional sports, through an examination of the disciplinary repercussions of the feminine athletic in the lives of sporting women. The theoretical concerns that underlie this research endeavour have been informed by Northern-based feminist theories of sport that posit sports participation on the one hand as an empowering experience for women, and on the other hand as nothing more than a new lens through which women's bodies become disciplined and regulated. Although I recognise that the emergence of a feminine athletic in the past decade has served to validate women's sporting subjectivities, I nonetheless remain critical as to the extent to which this feminine athletic fosters empowerment and equality for South African women in professional football.

My interest in women's football as an area of study is rooted in my own experiences as a footballer, in Norway and in South Africa. As a woman footballer I have personally experienced the prejudice and stereotyping that many women face, but I have also become convinced that sports can offer a sense of physical empowerment unlike any other activity. As previous research projects have supported this claim, I approached this thesis with the same aim in mind; to show how sport can physically empower women. However, after having done a few interviews it became painfully evident to me that sports participation is not the same at recreational and professional levels, and that a distinction needs to be made between leisurely and competitive football especially within a South African context. This thesis then represents my personal theoretical journey through women's football, but also aims to shed light on previously unmentioned aspects of women's sporting lives in South Africa.

Chapter 1 provides the reader with a brief introduction to Northern feminist perspectives on sport, and also presents the feminist theories of surveillance and empowerment that have motivated this thesis. Chapter 2 provides a detailed presentation of the context of South African sports, and traces the development of modern South African sport from pre- colonial times. Special emphasis has however, been placed on highlighting the developments of women's sports, and women's football since the 1960s, in order to thoroughly introduce the reader to the terrain in which professional women footballers in South Africa make a living. Chapter 3 presents my personal experience with football, as a player and a researcher, and then goes on to show how my experiences as a player, researcher and more recently a sport-in-development practitioner have combined with theoretical interests to form a very specific research focus. The latter part of Chapter 3 provides a description of the research focus and the key research questions that have shaped this thesis. In Chapter 4 I outline the feminist research theories, methodologies and methods that have informed by approach to gender-sensitive research, while I also present some arguments concerning research positionality that have risen from my own experiences. Chapter 4 is concluded through a break- down of the steps through which the material for this thesis was

gathered, analysed and presented. The final two chapters of this thesis presents, analyses and discusses the interview material. In Chapter 5 the main research findings are presented, and I provide a brief analysis of the findings. Key research findings and questions are presented in Chapter 6, where I also discuss the findings of this thesis in relationship with the material presented in Chapters 1 and 2. The final section of this thesis provides some concluding arguments, recommendations for further research, but also mentions briefly the personal lessons- learnt over the course of this two-year journey.

University Of Cape Town

CHAPTER 1:

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES AND THEORIES FROM THE NORTH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As a result of my theoretical and geographical research interests, this literature review is presented in two separate chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on Northern-based feminist perspectives and theories, and presents those theoretical standpoints that have informed and shaped this Masters thesis. While the second part of the literature review, provided in Chapter 2, provides attempts to give the reader an understanding of the main issues in the development of modern South African sports. This two-pronged approach to presenting this literature review shows clearly the complex and diverse collection of research and writing that I have had to examine in preparation for this, and previous, research endeavours, and it is particularly illuminating as to the 'gaps' and 'silences' in the current state of feminist sport sociology.

This chapter will provide an outline of the feminist issues and theories that have informed the choice of research focus for this Masters thesis, and pays specific attention to recent postmodernist feminist analyses of sport. The first section of this chapter provides a brief presentation of how discourses of femininity, masculinity and heteronormativity have limited women's sporting potentials and opportunities and discusses how binary constructions of heteronormative masculinity and femininity serve to define the female body as almost antithetical to athleticism. Moreover, this section shows how heteronormativity has supported and naturalised the assumed binary opposition between men and women. After a brief discussion of the impact of compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia within sports, the section concludes by referring to the recent emergence of a feminine athletic.

The second part of this chapter focuses on theories relating to empowerment and surveillance in women's sporting lives. I present theories that posit sports and physical activity as holding empowering potentials for women, in terms of physical strength, confidence and embodiment, but I conclude the section by raising some critical questions as to the surveillance and disciplinary regimes that impact on women's negotiations with (elite- level) sports. The chapter as a whole aims to highlight the complex terrain women have had to negotiate in order to legitimately participate in sports, and attempts to show that although feminine athleticism is becoming increasingly acceptable, heterosexual attractiveness and appearances remain fundamental in defining a feminine athletic.

1.2 FEMINIST SPORT STUDIES

A critical engagement with sport and gender emerged in the United States, Canada and England in the late 1960s and was hugely influenced by the development of a discipline for the study of physical education in the previous decade (Bandy, 2005). Most of the research and writing produced in this early stage was concerned only with the female athlete (Bandy, 2005; Markula, 2005) and was later been criticised for presenting simplified analyses by presenting gender (or sex) as a *"variable or distributive category"* (Birrell, 2000:64, cited in Markula, 2005:3). In the 1980s however, through what is referred to as feminist cultural studies, analyses became more sophisticated and feminist writings on sport became *"a theoretically informed, critical analysis of the cultural forces that work to produce the ideological practices that influence the relations of sport and gender"* (Birrell, 1988:492 cited in Markula, 2005:3). Following this development, the scope of research widened and in 1986 Helen Lenskyj was the first feminist to offer a critical analysis of sport and sexuality (Bandy, 2005). With the development of arguments concerning compulsory heterosexuality within sports, feminist sport studies in the 1990s continued to examine the ways in which sport uphold and inform notions of masculine superiority (Markula, 2005). The most recent developments within this discipline are marked by elements of postmodernism, post structuralism and third- wave feminism (Markula, 2005;

Heywood and Dworkin, 2003) and feminist sport studies has emerged as a complex focus area and covers subdisciplines such as sport literature, sport history, sport psychology, physical education and sport sociology (Markula, 2005).

Despite this, feminist sport studies remain a small, and geographically focussed interest area. The discipline is still dominated by feminists located in the North (especially the United States, Canada and Europe) and the subject matter reflects this. For someone wanting to engage with a feminist sociological study of sport in an African context, there are few African based feminists to rely on, except for what has been published by Denise Jones, Cheryl Roberts and Cora Burnett. A few Northern based feminists, such as Martha Saavedra and Cynthia Pelak, have ventured onto the African continent, but apart from Jennifer Hargreaves, none have offered an in-depth sociological study of gender (or women) and sport in South Africa. Feminists explorations of South African sports are limited to considerations of historical and current inequalities and material constraints, and apart from the contributions made by Hargreaves, no significant sociological material has been published that examines intersections of gender/race/class as they relate to embodiment and sexuality. In South African sport studies women's sporting experiences are grossly underrepresented and even when they do emerge, gendered analyses fail to be presented.

1.3 MASCUINITY, FEMININITY AND HETERONORMATIVITY IN SPORT

For many 'sport' and 'femininity' seem contradictory terms. Traditional and hegemonic discourses of femininity (and masculinity) have functioned to create an image of the ideal woman that has historically excluded the possibility of her being active, athletic and feminine at the same time. Michael Messner (1988:197) has argued that the "*the female athlete- and her body- has become a contested ideological terrain*". In this, women's participation in sports can be theorised as embedded in cultural norms around "womanhood", but it should also be understood as shaped and regulated according to heteronormative ideas of

femininity that render the female body as distinctly different from the (male) athletic body (Hargreaves, 1994).

Due to this, women have experienced large- scale marginalisation from participating in modern and competitive sports, and numerous vicious and persistent stereotypes and myths about the ‘nature of women’ have been used to justify and perpetuate this marginalisation. Donna de Varona, in her chapter contribution to Magan and Hong’s benchmark book “*Soccer, Women and Sexual Liberation: Kicking off a new era*” (2004), suggests that the following myths have been most instrumental in denying women real sporting opportunities:

1. *Participating in sport will make women unfeminine*
2. *Participating in elite sport will harm women’s reproductive organs and will result in the inability to produce children*
3. *Women do not need to learn about the lessons of life on the playing field of sport, but men do*
4. *Women will never be accepted as real athletes because they are not as strong fast and muscular as men are*
5. *Women athletes will never be as popular as male athletes; therefore, they will not attract audiences large enough to make women’s sport financially profitable and viable*
6. *Women are not as interested in sport as men are; therefore, opportunities should not be wasted on them.*

(de Varona, 2004;7)

Sports offer an arena in which male domination is powerfully perpetuated, and feminist scholars have increasingly become concerned with “*sport as a site for relation of domination and subordination and the reproduction of gendered power relations*” (Scruton, Fasting, Pfister and Bunuel, 1999;99). As such, sport should be viewed as a social institution that perpetuates the gendered ideologies in wider society through appealing to discourses of the naturalness of men’s privilege and domination. However, sport also offers an arena for challenging the same

gendered ideologies; sport is an “important arena for the disruption of the binary oppositions of masculinity/femininity and the emergence of potentially transgressive forms of sporting femininities” (Sraton et al., 1999;100).

Masculinity, femininity and sport

In her book tracing the development of women’s sport and athleticism in Britain, Jennifer Hargreaves (1994) argues that Victorian beliefs about women’s sexuality and reproductive capacities were instrumental in shaping beliefs about women and sports. She argues that notions of ‘natural’ sexual differences between men and women essentially barred women from participating in sports; *“The most significant biological differences between men and women are connected with procreation...although these essential biological differences need not prevent healthy women from exercising...they have provided the major justification for limiting women’s participation at all times of their life-cycle”* (Hargreaves, 1994:43). As a part of this, Hargreaves continues, beliefs about the ‘nature of woman’, functioned to justify inequality and limit women’s participation in sport and physical activity through ‘proving’ that women’s physical bodies were ‘too weak’ to withstand participating in sport (Hargreaves,1994). These ideologies of difference were fiercely contested by women and feminists, and while inequalities continued to persist, Hargreaves states that British women were increasingly participating in physical exercise and sports (Hargreaves,1994). Opportunities for participation were limited mostly to middle- class British women (Hargreaves,1994). Participation was promoted for girls and boys through the public school system, but because women’s bodies were assumed to only be strong enough for recreational and leisurely physical activity, competitive sports remained a male prerogative (Hargreaves, 1994).

Michael Messner (1988) supports the argument posed by Hargreaves, and argues that the growth and development of modern, organised sports occurred around the turn of the 20th century, and was a response to a crisis in masculinity brought on by a changing capitalist social order. Industrial capitalist development,

according to Messner (1988), made it hard for men to maintain their patriarchal positions as breadwinners and family heads, and this coupled with *“the rise of female dominated public schools, urbanization, and the closing of the frontier all lead to widespread fears of ‘social feminization’ and a turn-of-the-century crisis of masculinity”* (1988:200). As a response to this crisis men increased their emphasis on physicality and toughness as genuine aspects of masculinity and organised sports started taking on a more important role in constructing and validating masculinity. Messner states that in this context *“sport was a male- created homosocial cultural sphere that provided men with psychological separation from the perceived feminization of society while also providing dramatic symbolic proof of the ‘natural superiority’ of men over women”* (1988:200).

Although important developments have occurred concerning beliefs about women’s and men’s bodies, both Messner (1988) and Hargreaves (1994) suggest that the construction of sport as a male domain can be traced back to Victorian and post- Victorian contexts and developments. It was in this context that beliefs were formed about the ‘natural’ superiority of men over women; beliefs that have functioned to shape discourses of femininity and masculinity, and effectively barred women from equal sports opportunities. Even today these ideologies of biological difference are powerful in limiting women’s participation in sports. Modern sports exist as an arena for celebrating physical masculinity and sportsmanship, and sportswomen’s achievements continue to be measured against men’s. The notion of sexual difference lies at the heart of modern competitive sports, and according to Willis (1994) this serves to maintain male domination. This male domination is supported through the equation of athleticism with masculinity and through an *“association of males and maleness with valued skills and the sanctioned use of aggression, force and violence”* (Messner, 1990:205).

Messner goes on to argue that just as hegemonic constructions of masculinity legitimise and enforce male superiority and domination, hegemonic constructions of femininity *“have solidified male privilege through constructing and then*

naturalizing the passivity, weakness, helplessness and dependency of women” (Messner, 1988;203). This creates a binary relationship between ideas of masculinity and femininity and sets up a situation where qualities associated with masculinity are antithetical to femininity. This binary system, according Helen Lenskyj (1990) serves as the cornerstone of patriarchy and is supported through modern competitive sports. Lenskyj claims that “sport, by prevailing definitions concerned with physical ability and body compartment, provides an appropriate site for instruction in masculinity and femininity” (1990:240).

Heteronormativity in sport

“Heteronormativity is the institutionalisation of exclusive heterosexuality in society. Based on the assumption that there are only two sexes and that each has predetermined gender roles, it pervades all social attitudes” (Steyn and van Zyl, 2009:3).

Heteronormativity regulates not only sexual relationships, but also the roles, behaviours, appearances and sexualities of, and relationships between and among, women and men. Moreover, heteronormative discourses normalise a particular relationship between sex, gender and sexuality that posits woman/feminine/heterosexual (and man/masculine/heterosexual) as a natural order from which variance is considered a punishable deviance (Caudwell, 2003). A fundamental need for highlighting sex difference lies at the heart of heterosexual ideologies. According to Kolnes (1995:62), the heterosexual paradigm is *“a paradigm which institutionalizes certain images of femininity and masculinity, as well as male domination and female subordination”*. Within sports, the heterosexual paradigm functions to police the appearances and appropriateness of female bodies. Whereas ‘athleticism’ is easily compatible with masculinity, and thus male heterosexuality, it is not a normalised feature of femininity; *“the implications for women, therefore, are that unless ‘proven’ otherwise, that is displaying visible signifiers of heterosexuality or playing in traditionally female-appropriate sport, female athletes are frequently presumed to*

be lesbian” (Cox and Thompson, 2001:10). This need for women to ‘prove’ their femininity (and thus their heterosexuality) has by many been referred to as the ‘feminine apologetic’ (Lawler, 2002; Theberge, 2000; Roth and Basow, 2004), in this, female athletes are made to seem acceptable and their athleticism appropriate by presenting themselves as sexually appealing to men.

Jayne Caudwell (2003) in a similar vein places emphasis on the importance of sexual difference and compulsory heterosexuality in the sporting world (Caudwell, 2003). Caudwell argues that sports “*epitomizes sexual differentiation... in fact, most sport is premised on dimorphic sex and the notion of sex difference is natural, stable and fixed*” (Caudwell, 2003:384). This, she argues, legitimises certain types of sporting bodies while excluding others, thus effectively creating a system of compulsory heterosexuality (Caudwell, 2003). Through her research on women football players in England Caudwell attempts to show how women self-police and regulate their bodies and appearance to comply effectively with this compulsory order of “*woman-feminine-heterosexual*” (Caudwell, 2003:385).

Physical strength is seen as a masculine quality, and thus supports notions of masculine athletic superiority and the heterosexual paradigm. This is central in defining which sports are feminine-appropriate and which are not by suggesting that women’s athletic abilities leave them unable to successfully compete in tests of physical strength. According to Kolnes: “*to be a woman and to do hard physical training is often perceived to be a contradiction in terms*” (Kolnes, 1995:64). Women who cross these boundaries by participating in so-called male-dominated sports thus often have their sexuality called into question (McDermott, 1996). Women who do not seem to display ‘feminine’ qualities, or who display too masculine qualities are seen to threaten the heterosexual paradigm, and often become labelled as sexual deviants (homosexual). Mackinnon (1987), Hargreaves (1993) and McDermott (1996) all agree that “*the linking of sexuality and physicality is intimately connected to male attempts to control or prevent women’s participation in physical activity and sport*” (McDermott, 1996:14).

Testing femininity and womanhood

Notions of 'natural' sex differences lies at the heart of most modern competitive sports, one of the most intimately gendered institutions in society. Most competitive sports (with the exception of for example 'Ultimate Frisbee') are divided between men's and women's sport. Seemingly due to concerns over 'fair play' and fair competition, men and women do not compete against each other.

Due to the association of athletic ability with manhood and masculinity, women still face the challenge that they might not be 'real' women, and may, even at the highest level of professional competition (such as the Olympics) be asked to undergo a so-called 'sex test' to prove that they really are women (Wackwitz, 2003). In fact, sex test were mandatory for all female athletes at Olympic Games between 1968 and 1998 (Wackwitz, 2003), since then, only athletes who are suspected of not being 'fully' female are tested. As was the case with Caster Semenya, the Champion South African 800 meter runner, during the 2009 World Championship in Berlin, Germany. Shortly after Semenya qualified for the 800 meter final "*the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)... conducted physical tests and genital screening to try to determine the legitimacy of Semenya's sex*" (Moyo, Mail and Guardian, 19/08/2009). Despite the controversy Semenya proceeded to win the women's 800meter final, beating her closest competitor with over two seconds. The concerns that Semenya might not be a 'real' woman seem to be solely based on her physical appearance. Clearly illustrated by this quote from the Mail and Guardian; "*A muscular physique for a girl her age, facial hair and a deep-toned voice have all raised suspicions*" (Moyo, Mail and Guardian, 19/08/2009). Semenya's appearance disrupts notions of femininity and appropriate feminine appearances as embedded in heteronormative discourses. As a result of her transgressing hegemonic discourses Semenya's biological sex (and gender identity) has been questioned, and consequently tested.

Sex tests (or as they are also referred to 'gender verifications' or 'femininity tests') are, according to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) put in place in order to ensure that women do not have to compete with individuals who are physically superior to 'real women'. Those found not to be 'real' women are subsequently stripped of medals, barred from further competition and forever become known as 'non- women'. Wackwitz refutes claims about the necessity of sex testing female athletes and argues that;

"Their conclusion that sex testing is necessary to preserve and protect the integrity of women's events is supported by and generated out of myth systems which uphold common conceptions about (a) the incompatibility of athletes and femininity and (b) the naturally occurring division of humanity into male and female categories" (Wackwitz, 2003:555)

Wackwitz (2003) here touches on a crucial point when it comes to women's engagements with sport and physical activity; the seemingly unavoidable contradiction between athleticism and femininity creates a situation in which simultaneously being a woman and an athlete is almost an impossibility. Discourses about the 'natural' physical difference between men and women function to sustain a belief that athleticism and muscularity is compatible only with masculinity. As a result, many women do not partake in sports, some quit while they are still young, and others are in situations where they are constantly apologising for the 'masculine' appearance of their athletic bodies.

Homophobia in women's sports

The labeling of women that transgress heteronormativity and the compulsory sex/gender/sexuality order forms part of the widespread homophobia within sports. A consequence of heteronormativity, homophobia not only serves to keep many women away from sport, it also puts women who are labeled as 'deviant' (read: not heterosexual) at risk of homophobic prejudice and violence.

Homophobia in sport functions to uphold the status quo and the current gender order. Pat Griffin argues that *“homophobia serves as glue that holds gender role expectations in place... the purpose of calling a woman a lesbian is to limit her sport experience and make her feel defensive about her athleticism”* (Griffin, 1998:19-20). As such, heteronormativity and homophobia creates a situation in which many sporting women are policing their own bodies and appearances to fit with conventional femininity. Thus, femininity becomes a code- word for heterosexual (Kolnes, 1995). By associating women’s sports with homosexuality women’s participation in sport is justifiably limited and marginalized (Griffin, 1998).

Because football is a masculine domain, women who transgress boundaries by choosing to take up the game, are frequently read as lesbians; their choice of sport is seen as an indication of their sexual preferences (Cox and Thompson, 2001). Heteronormative discourses create situations in which heterosexual femininity is compulsory, and many lesbian players feel they are forced to appear, and pass, as being heterosexual in order to successfully compete and avoid harassment (Cox and Thompson, 2001). Drawing on their research among women footballers in New Zealand, Cox and Thompson suggest that because of the homophobic climate in which women’s football exists, heterosexual players have been pressured *“to disassociate themselves from lesbian team- mates and to self-police their image to conform to dominant constructions of femininity based on conspicuous heterosexuality”* (Cox and Thompson, 2000:21). This self- policing often includes heterosexist slur, letting their hair grow and choosing very feminine styles of dressing and moving. Homophobia not only creates difficult environments for both lesbian and heterosexual women, it also seems to hinder many young players from actively taking up the sport (Cox and Thompson, 2001). Because they fear being labeled as lesbians, or because they fear the lesbian ‘bogeywoman’, young women will choose not to participate (Cox and Thompson, 2001), or will refuse to play for teams that are rumored to be ‘for lesbians’.

While homophobia affects most women in sport, it has a particular implication for those women who identify as homosexual/lesbian. Many sporting lesbians remain

‘in the closet’ for fears of discrimination, alienation or even violence (Griffin, 1998). Due to this, homosexuality within sport remains an almost invisible issue, and very little research and writing has given this issue the attention it deserves. In South Africa, discourses about homosexuality as un-African are widespread and broadly supported. Gay and lesbian Africans are said to be “*mimicking Western or ‘White’ culture*” (Muholi, 2004:117). Many openly homosexual South Africans become victims of hate crimes although the South African constitution protects against any form of discrimination, and the Equality Act of 2000 specifically outlaws hate crimes (Martin, Kelly, Turquet and Ross, 2009). Zanele Muholi argues that Black lesbian women are at particular risk of hate crimes and corrective rape as they occupy identities at the intersection of racist and sexist discourses concerning Black women’s sexualities; “*the rape of black lesbians reconsolidates and reinforces African women’s identity as heterosexuals, as mothers, and as women*” (Muholi, 2004:122). Muholi’s argument is supported by research undertaken by the Gay rights group Triangle (cited in Martin, Kelly, Turquet and Ross, 2009); they found that while only 44% of white Lesbians in the Western Cape live in fear of violence, 86% of Black lesbians experience the same fears (Martin, Kelly, Turquet and Ross, 2009).

The fear of violent attacks and rape remain a very real part of lesbian women’s lives in South Africa, and women footballers (lesbian or not) are not exempt from this. On the 28th of April 2008 former Banyana Banyana player Eudy Simelane was found dead not far from her parents house in Kwa Thema, Johannesburg. Eudy had been raped and subsequently stabbed 25 times. Simelane was one of very few women who lived openly as a lesbian in Kwa Thema. Following the murder, one man has been sentenced to 32 years imprisonment. However, “*on sentencing the judge said that Eudy’s sexual orientation had “no significance” in her killing*” (Martin, Kelly, Turquet and Ross, 2009:10), which clearly signals the public silencing of African homosexualities.

Changing femininity

Feminists have long been critical of images of sportswomen in the commercial press and media; they have particularly raised concerns about the seeming eroticization and commoditization of the female sporting body (see for example Hargreaves, 1994). Kissling (1999) has for example suggested that the media, like sportswear designers and producers are likely to objectify sporting women through emphasising the sexual and erotic appeal of the female athlete's body in ways that re-present femininity within the heterosexual paradigm (Kissling, 1999). These representations also serve to perpetuate homophobic tendencies in sport by emphasising that feminine athletes are supposed to be heterosexually appealing.

It remains important, however, to note that discourses of femininity are not stable and fixed, as more and more women successfully take part in competitive sports, new discourses of athletic femininity are forged. Sportswomen are actively involved in redefining images and carving the way for more empowered images of women and femaleness (Hargreaves, 1994). In recent years, an increasing number of images portray sportswomen as physically powerful and muscular, and a 'fit' and 'toned' body has become the image to strive towards even in the fashion industry. As female physical attractiveness has increasingly become tied not only to a slender or thin body, but also to presenting a body that is athletic and muscular, many female athletes, rather than being viewed as too strong/muscular/masculine, are now seen as fashion icons (though there are several exceptions). While it remains true that men are supposed to have more, and bigger, muscles than women, an image of the physically powerful and muscular female body has become a part of the fashion industry and of feminine body ideals. Heywood and Dworkin (2003:81) argue that "*suddenly the athletic body has become ideal for both sexes*" and that there has been a "*male objectification alongside the idealization of female masculinity*" (2003: 82). Building on this, they argue that the feminist rejection of images of athletic femininity fails to take the objectification and commodification of the male body into

consideration; "... the commentators who are so quick to cry out against sexualized media representations of women forget that boys and men have become object of the same desirous, product- buying inducing gaze that the girls and women have" (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003: 104).

Heywood and Dworkin (2003) claim that while images of sporting women might very well be erotic and sexualized, the same holds true for most images of sporting men. As such, they claim that it is time for feminist critics of such images to recognize the value of the existence of an 'athletic' femininity. Although such images are often constructed within discourses of fitness and thinness, they nonetheless represent a discourse of femininity that affords women recognition as active and physical beings- they provide legitimacy and authority for women's physical activity. These images, when they first appeared in the 'mainstream' media in the 1990s represented an important turn in representations of active women. Commenting on the first advertisement to represent a powerful athletic femininity (Nike advert from 1992), Heywood and Dworkin (2003: 3) write: "*that ad, and others like it, made some of us feel that finally, after years of the self- doubt that comes with invisibility, we were valued by the culture that had previously ignored us*". Despite the numerous, and often very valid critiques, images of athletic femininity have affirmed and given legitimacy to sporting women and athletic femininities, and, as such, they have provided opportunities for young women to construct athletic and physically active subjectivities without running the risk of being labelled as 'pseudo-men'.

1.4 SPORTBODIES, EMPOWERMENT AND SURVEILLANCE

"Not to have confidence in one's body is to lose confidence in oneself"

(Simone de Beauvoir, 1972; 357)

In this section I will provide an outline of a selection of feminist perspectives on (women's)sportbodies, empowerment and surveillance. I start the section by drawing on feminist and postmodern interpretations of the body within

discourses and sporting embodiment, before a move on to give a brief outline ideas concerning the benefits of sports participation for girls and women. In the final half of this section I show how feminist scholars have made use of Foucauldian analyses to theorise women's empowerment through sports participation, by paying specific attention to a reconceptualisation of physicality. I then move on to present arguments that suggest that sports participation, especially at a professional level, can impede on or hinder empowerment due to the of intense regulation and surveillance of professional sports women's bodies. This section aims to show how feminist perspectives have shaped my thinking of physical embodiment and empowerment; especially as it has highlighted the tensions and ambivalence between empowerment and surveillance.

The body in sport

In any human existence the body is fundamental. We live, experience and sense the world through our bodies. Zakus (1995:81) argues that: "... *we know the world through the body, just as the body produces the world for us*". As such, being in the world, and sensing the world, depends upon the body; in fact, the world comes to be through the body (Hockey and Collinson, 2007). No social act, existence or 'being in the world' will be possible without the body. Within sports, the importance of the body becomes even more evident; we do sports with, through, and on, the physical body. The body produces the world and it gives social performances, like sport, meaning (Zakus, 1995). Hargreaves has for example suggested that the body constitutes "*the material core of sporting activity*"(1987:141).

However, the 'body' in sport also functions to normalise hegemonic beliefs about women and men through naturalising physical capabilities and characteristics. It is a generally accepted 'fact' that women are physically weaker than men, be this due to height or muscle- mass and ratio differences. This fact however, remains fundamental in supporting the heterosexual paradigm and the belief that men are natural athletes while women are not. Lenskyj (1990) for example, argues that

because men tend to outperform women in competitions involving tests of strength and endurance “men can maintain the illusion of athletic superiority by naming these attributes as bona fide requirements of the ideal athlete” (1990:237). In this process, sports that test kinesthetic ability, flexibility and coordination are often overlooked and devalued, as the gender- gap in these is smaller. Following the Butlerian logic of gender as a performative, Roth and Bosow (2004) point out that society in effect convinces women of their weakness and also claim that “femininity ideology goes far beyond convincing society and women themselves that they are weak: the ideology actually makes them weak, or at least weaker than they need be” (Roth and Bosow, 2004:249).

Within the current consumer culture, our bodies have become extremely important to our sense of self; not only in relation to how one understands and constructs the ‘self’, but also as it is fundamental to how one is read and understood by others. The body as a performance is not only important in relation to gender identities, but also to one’s sense of worth. Sport and physical exercise has become increasingly important in these processes as “the exercise regime is one practice of the “self” that “inscribes” or “writes” upon the body, marking it with sociocultural messages that are interpreted by others” (Maguire and Mansfield, 1998: 113).

For feminists (and feminist sport sociologists in particular), the body has been a vehicle for analysing and explaining women’s subordination and patriarchy, through reading the body in a less materialist way (than most sport sociology). According to McDermott (2000:333) “the female body...continues to be a contested terrain upon which gender relations are played out”. Through examining the ways in which the body is socially constituted, feminists have studied “interrelationships between power, gender and identity” (Maguire and Mansfield, 1998:109). Many of these examinations of the female body have centered on Foucauldian notions of how bodies are produced and disciplined in relation to discourses. In this, a point is made for examining how women’s bodies are constituted in hegemonic discourses that render the body docile. According to

Foucault “*a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved*” (Foucault, 1977:136). Thus, women’s docile bodies are disciplined to ‘fit’ with hegemonic notions of femininity, notions that construct the female subject as less active and ‘physical’ than their male counterparts. Such (feminist) Foucauldian analyses are argued to enable a fuller understanding of subjectivities and physical embodiment (Chase, 2006).

The benefits of sports participation

There is a widespread belief in the psychological and physical benefits that physical activity and sport brings to girls’ and women’s lives (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003). These arguments, though prominent also among sports feminists, have in the past decade been adopted by international sport-in-development discourses, and serves as a justification for lettin ‘gender’ translate to a focus on women within development work. According to the Women’s Sports Foundation (cited in Heywood and Dworkin, 2003) the benefits of sport participation include; higher self esteem and confidence, a positive body image, learning strategic, cooperative and leadership skills, prevention of breast cancer and osteoporosis, lowering blood sugar and cholesterol levels and providing more energy and a heightened sense of well- being.

Sport and physical activity has come to be seen as “*an extremely powerful means of promoting physical and mental health*” (Sport for Development and Peace, International Working Group, 2008; 8). The Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDP-IWG), for example, has suggested that “*Sport participation leads to increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and enhanced sense of control over one’s body*” (Sport for Development and Peace, International Working Group, 2008; 10). Moreover, sport and physical activity has been argued to hold very specific advantages for girls and women, and the SDP-IWG argues that;

“Research on sport, gender, and development indicates that sport can benefit girls and women by:

- Enhancing health and well being;*
- Fostering self-esteem and empowerment;*
- Facilitating social inclusion and integration;*
- Challenging gender norms; and*
- Providing opportunities for leadership and achievement.*

...Sport programs can enhance the empowerment process by challenging gender norms, reducing restrictions and offering girls and women greater mobility, access to public spaces, and more opportunities for their physical, intellectual and social development.” (SDP-IWG, 2008:131).

McDermott (2000) supports these claims and argues that one of the most striking ways in which physical activity can ‘empower’ women physically is through providing opportunities for women to experience their bodies physically, through physical work. Clearly, learning and developing new skills carries with it a sense of achievement and empowerment (Garrett, 2004), but McDermott (2000) adds to this by arguing that because most women experience their bodies through appearance- related concerns, physical activity offers a space where experiences of the physical body ‘at work’ can serve to liberate women from the feminine body aesthetics and discourses attached to hegemonic femininity. She suggests that the *“potentially empowering consequence of physical activity...is to broaden their [women’s] understanding of the multiple ways, beyond appearance, in which they can physically experience themselves”* (McDermott, 2000: 356).

Jonny Hjelm and Eva Olofsson, writing about women’s football in Sweden, go so far as to suggest that women footballers are pioneers and become role models in their own communities and countries (2004). Women footballers are pioneers because they refuse to accept the limitations of heteronormative femininity and masculine domination, and Hjelm and Olofsson (2004) argue that many players experienced a heightened status in society because of their *“refusal to accept the traditional gender order that existed within the football movement...There was*

positive value in breaking the norms and values that dictated how life should be lived" (2004:197). It is these developments that lead Fan Hong to conclude that football is a world sport for women and that *"it represents modern feminism: unapologetic, individualistic, empowered and assertive"* (Hong, 2004:268).

With passing of Title IV in the United States, the emergence of an international Women in Sports (WIS) movement and increased feminist sport scholarship the past decades has seen an increased focus on gender 'work' particularly within sport-in-development organisations, institutions, donor agencies and national governments (Saavedra, 2005). This has enabled better attention to be paid to the ways in which sports are gendered and lend support to unequal gendered power relations in wider society. These discourses argue for the use of *"sport for gender equity"* (Meier, 2005), but reinforce the notion that 'gender work' is essentially about women. Denise Jones (2003) argues that as a result of this *"Gender equality has been interpreted as increasing the number of women and girls playing sport, not challenging male domination in decision-making positions"* (2003:140). The narrow concept of 'gender' as a code for 'women' has led to a de-politicisation of gender and feminist objectives, leaving it as a technical policy tool rather than a political project (Hassim, 2005; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead, 2004).

Feminist theories of empowerment through sport

Sport feminists, to shed light on the ways in which the female body has been constructed, have extensively made the work of Foucault. Recently, feminists in this field have also started to examine how a Foucauldian understanding of bodies and power can serve to foster women's empowerment from hegemonic, patriarchal notions of femininity (ie. Markula, 2003; McDermott, 2000). Jennifer K. Wesley (2001) has, for example, argued that by building muscle mass, female body builders de-stabilise and disrupt hegemonic discourses of gender identity. Citing Schultze, she argues that *"...the deliberately muscular women disturbs dominant notions of sex, gender, and sexuality, and any discursive field that includes*

her risks opening up a site of contest and conflict, anxiety and ambiguity” (Schultze in Wesley, 2001: 166).

However, feminist theories of empowerment through sport go beyond the claims made by Schultze, and suggest that in addition to challenging notions of what female bodies sport may also aid individual women’s empowerment through creating new ways for women to experience and understand their bodies. According to Markula (2003), using a Foucauldian analysis will enable a reading of embodied experiences that can highlight the empowering and liberating aspects of sporting experiences. She claims that by utilising Foucault’s notion of ‘technologies of the self’ to investigate how individuals *“recognize her/himself as a subject and in this sense, s/he can be understood to counter the technologies of power”* (Markula, 2003:88). These ‘technologies of the self’ are defined by Foucault (1988:18) as permitting

“...individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality”.

Expanding on this, Markula (2004) makes use of Foucault’s theory of ‘technologies of the self’ to examine how physical activity may offer women opportunities to ‘free’ themselves from ‘oppressive’ feminine body ideal. She suggests that *“the technologies of the self permit an individual to transform him- or herself by becoming recuperated, rather than disciplined, through power relations and relations of knowledge”* (Markula, 2004: 318). For physical activity to release liberatory potentials, critical awareness and self- reflection need to be taken seriously and included in fitness practices and programmes (Markula, 2004). Such critical awareness and self- reflection should, according to Markula (2004), include a critical examination of the relationship between the fitness discourses and discourses of the feminine ideal body; moreover, for activity to produce freedom, the emphasis of the practice should be on functionality and awareness rather than constructing the ideal feminine body.

Drawing on the analytical approach suggested by Markula (2003), Scott- Dixon (2008) argues for the possibility of sport and physical activity to offer freedom from constraining discourses of 'fitness' and 'fatness'; she argues that through power- lifting, one of her research participants was able to experience her own physical gifts and strength, rather than simply experiencing and understanding herself as someone 'fat' who has to use physical activity to 'get fit'. As such, while fitness and thinness discourses may 'taint' women's experiences of physical activity; it is undoubtedly true that through such activity women might also experience their bodies in ways that are not limited to such discourses. McDermott (1996) argues that feminists should make use of a concept of physicality to examine women subordination and empowerment through sport. She claims that *"utilizing the concept of physicality would not only help us to illuminate the processes through which women become physically passive and alienated from their bodies, but could also assist in revealing the social forces and institutions that actively engage in reproducing this alienation"* (McDermott, 1996:25). In order to successfully do this, she argues that we must approach physicality not as a masculine ability, but through an investigation of how one experiences oneself physically as a lived experience (McDermott,1996). In doing this, we must assess the processes through which women come to live their bodies in feminine ways, but also through exploring the *"meanings of the subjectively lived body"* (McDermott, 1996:26).

The central point of concern is, thus, that while sport and physical activity can disempower women by reinforcing new, albeit heteronormative, notions of femininity (Mansfield, 1998), such activity also offers opportunities for the 'technologies of the self' to foster action, thought and awareness that resists the same discourses. Maguire and Mansfield (1998), for example, argue that while physical activity involves oppressive disciplinary and discursive constructions concerning women's bodies, women who are physically active nonetheless *"experience feelings of confidence and self- possession in connection with being physically active"* (1998: 132). However, seeking to remain critical of bodily

empowerment through sport, they continue by suggesting that: “*the apparently liberating significance of exercise for women masks covert hegemonic processes*” (Maguire and Mansfield, 1998: 133). As such, they argue that the ‘liberating’ potentials of sport lie not with the sport, but with the ways in which sport is thought of, and what the motivations for participation are in individual women’s lives (Maguire and Mansfield, 1998).

Surveillance and the limits of empowerment

Feminists have long made use of Foucauldian analyses also to highlight the role of sport in the domination of women, by highlighting how women construct docile bodies through uncritically following the disciplinary and discursive regimes pertaining to physical activity practise (Markula, 2003). Considering the importance of physical activity to ideal (and attractive) femininity, Maguire and Mansfield (1998: 114) argue that “*the tyranny of slenderness*” is a direct result of what they term the “body- beautiful regime”; this regime and tyranny is a fundamental reason for why women in their study choose to take part in aerobics classes. They argue that women participate in organised activity, like aerobics, to attain the feminine ‘body- beautiful’; “*The body- beautiful has exchange value. It is status enhancing and brings with it the perception of youth, health, happiness, heterosexual attractiveness, and longevity*” (Maguire and Mansfield, 1998: 114). Thus, through disciplining their bodies according to the requirements of aerobics, women are argued to be essentially creating docile bodies constructed in relation to patriarchal notions of femininity.

This discipline does not automatically foster improved self-esteem, confidence and improved body images; it in fact forms part of an oppressive disciplinary system in which the focus is on attaining slenderness, weight- loss and the ‘body- beautiful’. This constitutes an oppressive system that “*...exacerbates women’s subordinate status in the gender order and restricts their social, physical and expressive potential*” (Garret, 2004:224). The heterosexy-fit ideal thus reinforces the White, middle- class female body as the standard of femininity. It essentially

“simultaneously creates ‘new’ womanhood as it re- creates ‘true’ womanhood” (Dworkin, 2001:347). In this view, physical activity and sport participation is little more than a ‘new’ way of disciplining women’s bodies and appearances. Heywood and Dworkin (2003: 39) also suggest that *“the ‘babe’ factor in sports...just reinforces traditional roles and creates yet another oppressive body ideal for girls to follow”*. Alongside this, images of sportswomen are increasingly eroticised. There exists a trend to accentuate the erotic qualities of female bodies, through techniques of photography and through sportswear and dress (Hargreaves, 1994). According to Hargreaves these sexualised images of sportswomen play on existing beliefs about femininity and thus continue to trivialise women’s sports by exaggerating sexual and erotic appeal (Hargreaves, 1994).

Dworkin suggests that the importance placed on emphasised and attractive femininity has an impact also on women’s training regimes and physical activities, and that it has instilled a *“glass ceiling on women’s muscular strength”* (2001:334). She argues that through limiting their weight training, women athletes adhere to the *“most recent form of docile bodily self-surveillance that aids patriarchal capitalism through the suggestion that bodies need to be increasingly industrious”* (Dworkin, 2001:334). As a result, women’s physical empowerment through sport is obstructed through a continued emphasis on constructions of female bodies as distinctly different from male bodies. As Dworkin succinctly puts it;

“If men are free to pack on thick layers of muscle while women carefully negotiate the upper limits of their muscle gains, this symbolizes the gendered nuances of everyday power and privilege...and also highlights the construction of sexed materiality itself”. (2001:346).

The body-beautiful regime is also *“constructed within a White, heterosexual, and class-based structure”*, and thus posits the ideal feminine body as being White, middle-class, slender, toned and heterosexual (Krane Choi, Baird, Aimar and Kauer, 2004:316). This narrow definition excludes Black, Queer and disabled bodies from ‘achieving’ femininity, and renders these bodies invisible. Due to racist constructions of hegemonic femininity, Black women are *“typically*

stereotyped as more ‘masculine’ than white women” (Ezzel, 2009:119), and sport scholars have also noted that naturalized discourses of physical bodies have contributed to a normalisation of racist practices in sport.

Bob Chappel (2001), for example, provides an outline and deconstruction of historical attempts at ‘proving’ the physical superiority of Black athletes vis-à-vis White athletes through drawing on racist scientific methods. Chappel succinctly points out that racist stereotypes are prevalent, for example, in American football, and they go so far as to determine which positions a player is best suited for- based on the assumed qualities ‘inherent’ to this racial category. This tendency, referred to as stacking, also seems to be prevalent in football (soccer), where few black players were, and seemingly still are, afforded opportunities to take up positions that form the ‘backbone’ of a team, tactically, strategically and competence wise. These instances of stacking are clearly based on elements of scientific racism and continue to devalue the mental capacities of black athletes, as is shown by Chappel in the following quote;

“...this disproportionate distribution of black players in certain positions was mainly due to stereotyping by managers and coaches in that they considered black players had certain attributes such as speed which is required in wide positions. Alternatively, managers and coaches thought that white players had cognitive attributes such as decision-making, which are required in central positions. These perceived black attributes are based on physical qualities, whereas the perceived white attributes are based on mental qualities” (Chappel, 2001: 101)

This point is supported by other research, and there seems to be a clear trend within the sports media to represent Black athletes as ‘natural’ athletes, whereas White athletes are valued for their intelligence and perseverance (van Sterkburg and Knoppers, 2004). These representations support a sexist and racist status quo, and van Sterkburg and Knoppers (2004:303) claim that

“Since (white male) dominance in western societies is usually based on a hierarchy in which mental qualities are valued above physical qualities, this discourse primarily supports the privileged position of many white men”.

Considering the globalised and capitalist nature of modern sports, Dworkin (2001) reminds us that the ‘global sport culture’ not only sustains racist and sexist practices, but it also supports a notion of empowerment and liberation based on liberal, individualist ideals. This, she argues, could create a ‘false consciousness’ of empowerment and, in her own words: *“While certain women disproportionately benefit from being physically powerful and healthy, an individualised fit body politics may be criticized as being removed from collective forms of empowerment that can challenge oppressive institutions and practices”* (Dworkin, 2001:334).

Disciplinary practices in elite sports

While sport participation may allow women (and men) a sense of physical-embodiment and power, an experience that has not previously been largely available to women, there are also growing concerns over the impact of elite/professional sport activity on physical embodiment. Johns and Johns (2000) claim that an *“...ethic of excess exists in elite sport. These excesses may include compulsive excessive, excessive weight training, the consumption of ergogenic aids and a high incidence of aberrant eating habits”* (2000: 222).

Moreover, the pressures of elite and professional sports create a situation in which ‘coping’ with pain and injury is an integral part of participation, as it is seen as inevitable to achieve success (Theberge, 2008). Through disciplining the body in line with discourses of elite sport and athleticism, many athletes come to treat, and perhaps experience, their bodies as machines for success (Zakus, 1995). In this, the body (again) becomes a mechanical object to be disciplined and controlled; often at the risk of permanent injury and illness. According to Heywood and Dworkin (2003: 12) *“the athletic aesthetic has become mainstream, and though seriously training to achieve it does bring health benefits... it also raises the greater risk of body image and eating disorders and compulsive training that*

athletes have always had. If we all look like athletes, we are all susceptible to the same risks”.

1.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to provide a presentation of the main feminist theories and perspective that have informed my research interests. It has shown that, from the emergence of modern competitive sports in the beginning of the 20th century naturalised discourses of sexual difference between men and women have functioned to marginalise women from large- scale and competitive participation. Normalised constructions of masculinity and femininity within a heteronormative structure have shaped beliefs about women’s capacities, characteristics and bodies and constructed a hegemonic feminine ideal that has historically excluded the possibility of being simultaneously feminine and athletic. However, following developments in Europe and North America (such as Title IV and WIS) and the increased production and consumption of globalised sports, new and more athletic feminine ideals have emerged and opened spaces for women form their own sporting and athletic subjectivities.

As doors have opened for women to integrate sport and physical activity into their daily lives, routines and identities, feminists have increasingly started to examine the how sports participation can empower women and force changes in dichotomous understandings of masculinity and femininity. Due to the centrality of the body in both sport and gender, feminists argue that while sports may further engrain gendered inequalities, they might also enable discursive shifts due to the break- down of naturalised beliefs. In this, they argue, women’s empowerment is key.

The theories and perspectives outlined in this chapter have been instrumental in my understanding of sports as a social institution and a gendered practice. However, because feminist sport studies is a developing field that has not yet been established fully on the African continent, certain theoretical concerns

persist for me. The literature presented above presents sporting women as a homogenous group, and makes few distinctions between recreational sport and physical activity and competitive, elite- level sport. In my own research, I have found that recreational women footballers and elite- level footballers experience and negotiate the tension between surveillance and empowerment in very different ways, but feminist sport studies makes little mention of this critical difference. Moreover, I remain am interested in examining whether South African women's experiences in sport are comparative to those of women in Northern European and American contexts or whether the Northern domination of feminist analyses of sports masks differences in women's experiences by neglecting to examine the intersections of gender, race and class as axes of domination in women's lives.

CHAPTER 2:

SPORT, RACE AND GENDER IN SOUTH AFRICA

This chapter provides a detailed consideration of the context in which this thesis has emerged, and it attempts to give the reader an understanding of the main issues in the development of modern South African sports. It especially aims to provide a thorough presentation of the context in which the women footballers I interviewed live, and thus considers almost all published and reviewed material concerning women's experiences in South Africa. The development of South African sports is presented chronologically, moving from a consideration of pre-colonial and colonial sport to a presentation of sport and society in Apartheid and post- Apartheid South Africa. While these sections do make mention of women's experiences and the gendered nature of South African sports, the final two sections of this chapter provide a detailed outline of developments pertaining to women's sports, culminating in a profile of the development, and current state, of women's football in South Africa.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Looking at the contributions made by feminist sport scholars to critical examinations of women's sporting lives and experiences, a Northern bias is evidently clear. Feminist sport sociology is not established as a discipline on the African continent, and much still needs to be uncovered about African women's sports. However, some attempts have been made to raise awareness of how a study of African sports may enable a fuller understanding of the interconnectedness of gender and race. Hargreaves is one of the few academics who have dedicated efforts to writing about this, and she has made important contributions to the feminist study of South African sports. Through investigating Olympic sports in Zimbabwe and South Africa, she argues that the 'culture of sport' has been more predominant and resourceful among the white

communities and has led to a situation where more white women participate in sport on a higher level (Hargreaves, 1994). Moreover, she argues that in the South African context pressure for making sport multi-racial has largely been directed at black males, leaving *“the sporting potential of the female Black South African population untapped and unknown”* (Hargreaves, 1994:232).

Although South African women in general are marginalised in relation to sports development, Hargreaves also reminds us about the *“extraordinary diversity of South African women”* (Hargreaves, 1997:201). Central here is a recognition of the fact that while sports initiatives in South Africa are focused towards the male population, one must not attempt to treat South African women as a homogenous category; *“gender subordination is not uniform for all women, and there are conflicts between different groups of women, as well as between men and women”* (Hargreaves, 1997:201). This chapter then, drawing on the recommendations made by Hargreaves, attempts to show how raced and gendered discourses and inequalities have impacted on the formation of South African sports through providing a historical account of the development of modern sports.

2.2 PRE- COLONIAL AND COLONIAL SPORTS

Most considerations of sport and sporting practices in South Africa, and the African continent at large, seem to assume (often implicitly) that European colonialists brought sport to Africa. Peter Alegi (2004) refutes this, and shows how pre-colonial South African sporting activities such as stick- fighting, hunting, competitive dancing and foot racing constituted sporting practices in highly codified forms. In his words *“For African male youths, stick- fighting was sport”* (Alegi, 2004:9). He goes on to say; *“in the pre-colonial period, patriarchal South African societies developed gender- and age- based contests and recreations. Initiations, weddings, funerals and less formal social gatherings (usually run by the youth) presented an opportunity for public spectacles of physical prowess among the Nguni...and Sotho- Tswana...”* (Alegi, 2004:8). Being a key part of gendering

processes outdoor sport for young men enabled the development of physical strength and collective thinking in a way that was central in combat, hunting and herding (Alegi, 2004). Through these activities, young men “*forged assertive masculine identity, and enhanced their reputation of warriors*” (Alegi, 2004:9). Though women and girls were often excluded from the abovementioned sporting activities, due to a sexual division of labour that demanded young girls to do reproductive work, young girls took part in role- playing, singing and dancing activities around the time of puberty (Alegi, 2004). Sport was an integral part of a masculine youth culture, but did not have the same significance in male adulthood, where characteristics and qualities such as leadership skills, oratorical ability and restraint played more important roles (Alegi, 2004). Even so; “*the prominence of competitive dancing, stick fighting, cattle raiding and racing, and hunting in pre- colonial African societies in southern Africa formed a vital part of a local vernacular athletic worldview*” (Alegi, 2004:14). As such, Alegi suggests that local sporting ‘codes’ provided an important athletic framework into which British Colonial sports were built and developed (Alegi, 2004).

Sport and recreation formed an important part of the British Schooling system, and thus also British imperialism. As Britain was consolidating its role as a World Power and expanding the Empire; sports became an integral part of the imperial project, and British models of and ideas concerning sport were spread throughout the Empire (Nauright, 1997). According to Badenhorst (2004), the British public school system enforced a model of “muscular Christianity” that implied notions of gentlemanness, selflessness, fair-mindedness and generosity (2004:128). This politic of sport and civilisation became an vital part of the colonial project, and missionary schools throughout the empire continued to inscribe ‘uncivilised’ colonial subjects with ideals of civilisation through the uses of sport and recreation in the schooling system.

For the English- speaking settlers in South Africa, sport was one way in which they became part of the imperial community while at the same time savouring links with ‘home’ (Nauright, 1997). Nauright (1997), argues that “*English-speaking white*

schools in South Africa took up British games and used them to instil values of British elite culture” (1997: 25). Through sport, settler communities were tied together. Cricket, in particular, became “the epitome of British culture, morality, manners and racism, which served to alienate Afrikaners as well as most blacks” (Nauright, 1997:26). South African cricket teams established links with other British settler communities outside the Union, consolidating the importance of keeping links with ‘home’, while at the same time supporting a racial, rather than nation- based solidarity (Nauright, 1997). This served to deepen divisions within among whites in South Africa, and also caused rugby, rather than cricket, to achieve a high symbolic value during the Apartheid years (Nauright, 1997).

Nauright (1997) argues that the racialisation of sport that is evident in South Africa even today, has its roots in 20th century developments were *“sporting practice and associated popular culture surrounding sport became distinct social signifiers within the country” (Nauright, 1997:26). As such, white South African sport had closer links with (white) sporting organisations in the colonies of Australia and New Zealand than with non- white organisations in Africa (Nauright, 1997). Black South Africans, by 1900, were not included in sporting competitions in which Whites participated; and sport was generally established and developed in highly segregationist forms (Nauright, 1997). Nauright (1997:45) suggests that “... sport became one of the central cultural practices whereby white supremacy and difference were performed and learned over time”.*

It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that organised sports became a major concern in South Africa, and from the 1920s onwards, organised sports became a key part of policy (Badenhorst, 2004). American missionaries and the Johannesburg city council from the 1940s onwards saw organised sport as a way in which to deal with the city’s social ills created by newly urbanised Africans (Badenhorst, 2004). Organising sport for urban Africans became a key part of the colonial project because of its assumed potential for ‘civilising’ Africans. Through organised sport, the missionaries and the City Council (and to some extent the urban African middle class) aimed to educate and civilise Johannesburg’s Africans

by instilling in them ideals of sobriety, political moderation, sincerity and gentleman-ness (Banderhorst, 2004). Sport then, became a mechanism through which to “*promote a racial hegemony which would ensure the continued subordination of Africans with minimal resistance*” (Badenhorst, 2004:139). Their attempts however, had unintended effects in that it provided Africans in Johannesburg with the space, structures and framework for “collective organization and the growth of a political voice” (Badenhorst, 2004:139).

Despite the intimate attempts by colonialist for sports to remain deeply racialised and gendered, ‘Black’ forms of ‘White’ sporting codes developed all over South Africa, and many sporting codes were effectively ‘Africanised’. While Cape Colony officials set up Rugby Union foundations and organised the development of the sport in the Coloured areas of Cape Town, the sport quickly took on ‘Coloured’ and Muslim forms and meanings (Nauright, 1997). Nauright (1997) shows how rugby in coloured communities was adapted and took on new meanings; “*there was a strong influence of ‘respectability’ notions that were important for the urban African elite, however, in Cape Town this was also infused with concepts of respectable behaviour and self- discipline that stemmed from Muslim culture and the teachings of the Koran*” (1997:50). Football, initially a white, though working class, sport also became adapted; “*...the inherited institution of British Football was increasingly transformed to suit local customs and traditions, a process of Africanisation that embraced religious specialists and magic, various rituals of spectatorship as well as indigenous playing styles*” (Alegi, 2004:49).

Black sport in South Africa however, in addition to being racialised, also had important socio- economic class meanings and interpretations. In large, playing ‘White’ sport was closely tied to notions of respectability, elite culture and social exclusivity that stratified Black communities (Nauright, 1997), and sports administration and leadership was dominated by the Black political elite (Badenhorst, 2004), but in addition to this, participating in sport also became tied to class issues. Sports such as cricket and rugby became tied class status, and

were seen as 'respectable' elitist sports, whereas football was a sport for the (lower class) masses (Nauright, 1997 and Alegi, 2004).

2.3 APARTHEID AND SPORT

The history of sports in South Africa has been heavily shaped by colonialism and the Apartheid regime. As a part of the politics of Apartheid, sport in white communities was *"par excellence, a symbol and celebration of racial (and in particular Afrikaans) superiority and White masculinity"* (Hargreaves, 2000:18). Most sports facilities and resources were located in, and directed, at the development of sports in White communities only, and the racialised schooling system continued the institutionalisation of racism also within sports (Hargreaves, 2000). The colonial experience, and the reality of white dominance in the Union of South Africa formed part of a racialised (and gendered) administration and affiliation to sport in South Africa; and with the onset of Apartheid and National Party (NP) rule in 1948, these divisions were intensified. According to Nauright (1997), the perpetuation of racial discrimination within sport following from Apartheid laws, meant that at a time when sport in most parts of the world was moving towards racial inclusivity, *"South Africa went the opposite direction...as the segregationist policies of the first few decades of the twentieth century were hardened under Apartheid"* (1997:125).

Apartheid, and its extensive racially discriminatory legal framework, controlled most aspects of life in South Africa in the second half of the 21st century, this framework did not, however, years include laws that directly banned inter-racial or non-racial sports (Nauright, 1997). Other laws and policies, such as the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act and Pass Laws, effectively worked to prevent inter-racial sport by limiting transportation and travelling opportunities, as well as making it nearly impossible to find facilities where non-racial sport could be organised while securing the use of separate change rooms and bathrooms (Nauright, 1997). In 1956, the Minister of the Interior, Dr. T. E. Dungen made it clear that any non-white sport team, individual or club seeking to represent South

Africa internationally would not receive public funding, and that any individuals participating in such attempts would not be granted a passport to travel (Krotee, 1988). Representing South Africa internationally was possible only for white clubs, teams and participants; and, those white sportspeople who wished to partake in non-racial sport would have to leave representational sport for good and participate only in non-discriminatory competitions and clubs that were underfunded, under- resourced and restricted (Nauright, 1997). For Black sportspeople, however, representational sport was never even a possibility. Nauright (1997:128) argues that: *“the NP government and the South African press categorized all attempts by black sportspeople to gain recognition and international acceptance as attacks on white sport”*. In fact, due to the neglect of Black sport, causing lack of funding, resources and facilities, Nauright (1997) claims that the majority of Black people were not involved in formally organised sport during Apartheid, and that those sporting codes where Black sportspeople did participate (exceptions being boxing and football) were dominated by the educated, Black elite.

As a part of the politics of Apartheid and White supremacy, sport in white communities was *“par excellence, a symbol and celebration of racial (and in particular Afrikaans) superiority and White masculinity”* (Hargreaves, 2000:18). Most sports facilities and resources were located in White communities, and the racialised schooling system continued the institutionalisation of racism also within sports (Hargreaves, 2000). Through the schooling system the Apartheid government effectively racialised and gendered South African sports by making certain sports available only in certain schools. Indian, Coloured and Black communities and school had few and impoverished sports facilities, especially in the rural areas (Hargreaves, 2000). Coupled with these racist structures, there were also large inequalities in relation to gender. Although most state resources went towards promoting and sustaining White male sports, White women *“were relatively privileged and in many cases had excellent resources”* (Hargreaves, 2000:18). African women, on the other hand; *“were struggling for survival and had to contend with traditional and modern manifestations of male domination at the*

same time” (Hargreaves, 2000:18). Despite the extensive governmental control over South African’s sporting activities, non- racial sport was organised during Apartheid. Hargreaves (1997) argues that it was paradoxically because of Apartheid that sports became popular, as sport provided a space and opportunities for political and cultural resistance to White domination.

Sport remained an important form of expression in non-white communities in South Africa throughout Apartheid. Bale and Cronin (2003:1) argue that *“in the same way that postcolonial writers have used the language of the colonial to express themselves, so postcolonial sportsmen and women have largely used the bodily and sporting practices of the colonial in a similar fashion”*. Cheryl Roberts (1994) has for example devoted a (mini) book to highlighting how sport and the provision of recreational facilities was an important struggle for inmates at Robben Island. At Robben Island sport became a tool for unifying politically disparate group, through the struggle against the prison authorities but also through participating in the same teams (Roberts, 1994). Football was the first sport to be organised and played at Robben Island, but continued struggles also lead to provisions for rugby, tennis, volleyball, darts, table tennis, athletics, cricket and boxing (Roberts, 1994).

Apartheid resistance through organised sport appeared in the 1950s, following governmental calls for segregated sports and after both the ANC and the PAC launched passive resistance campaigns (Nauright, 1997). Sporting resistance aimed to unify South African sporting structures and achieve racially representativeness in international competitions and also formulated calls and campaigns for the international sporting community to boycott South African participation (Nauright, 1997). The South African Sports Association (SASA, formed in 1958) and the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC, formed in 1963) were the most important structures in the organisation of an international boycott movement (Nauright, 1997). SASA, being unable to *“win concessions locally, went directly to international bodies in attempts to win recognition of the right for black South African sportspeople to compete*

internationally” (Nauright, 1997:128). SASA started putting pressure on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to exclude South Africa from the 1960 Olympic Games, but to no prevail (Nauright, 1997). Despite being joined by SANROC in the early 1960s in putting pressure on the IOC to expel South Africa and the white South African Olympic and National Games Association (SAONGA) from the Olympic Movement, South Africa was not expelled until 1970, after almost 12 years of efforts on the part of SASA and SANROC (Nauright, 1997).

Organised sporting resistance to Apartheid was most importantly organised through the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) under the slogan “*No normal sport in an abnormal society*” (Hargreaves, 1997, Jones, 2001 and Nauright, 1997). Hargreaves (1997) has argued that in addition to this, the organisation and politics of SANROC were highly gendered and that “*most of the resources went to men and women had to work with great determination, and in the face of tremendous difficulties, to keep female sport alive in the Coloured and Black communities*” (1997:195). While SANROC organisation and politics was a very important part of sporting resistance, affiliation (formally or morally) to the structure nonetheless perpetuated and intensified the difficulties and marginalisation faced by Black sportspeople and organisations. Sporting women had to face these repercussions more often and more intensely than male athletes, due to the fact that during the struggle, race was prioritised over gender as a source of discrimination.

In the 1970s the NP government attempted to avoid further expulsion from the international sporting community and “*through its ‘multi-national’ sports policy... moves began to allow blacks to be selected in national teams*” (Nauright, 1997:141). Through this, South Africa could be represented by racially mixed teams in competitions that involved foreign teams and athletes, but the policy did nothing to strengthen the development of Black sporting structures and athletes as only “*white dominated sporting bodies and their black affiliates received government subsidies*” (Nauright, 1997:141). Over the course of the 1970s South Africa was expelled from most international sporting competitions and organisations, including the IOC and international football, athletics and cricket structures.

Nauright (1997:153) suggests that the psychological effect of boycotts and expulsion from international sport was very *“potent in undermining white South African confidence and complacency”*, especially due to the postponement and abandonment of Rugby and Cricket tours and competitions. He does, however, admit that *“the ultimate effectiveness of the sports boycott was to force white sporting officials to move ahead of politicians in the latter part of the 1980s, as various piecemeal attempts by whites to stave off boycotts failed to achieve the compromises necessary for the continuance of international sport”* (Nauright, 1997:155).

2.4 SPORT, NATIONBUILDING AND DEMOCRATISATION

In post-apartheid South Africa sport remains an important political tool; post-1994 sport became the symbol of the non-racial, rainbow nation. The 1995 Rugby World Cup provides a powerful example of the symbolism of sport for the new South Africa. In both this and the 1999 Rugby World Cup the Springbok's became the symbol of national unity and of South African victory over a violent past (Farquharson and Marjoribanks, 2003). The ultimate expression of this symbolism was perhaps when Mandela and Tutu were both photographed wearing the Springbok Rugby jersey (Farquharson and Marjoribanks, 2003). The reconceptualisation of the Springboks as a symbol of national unity has, however, been questioned in later years, as there have increasingly been calls for institutionalised non-racialism by ensuring more non-white players in the Springbok squad. Though the debate started during the 1999 Rugby World Cup, the most vocal calls for desegregation in the Springbok squad were found during the 2007 Rugby World Cup. Though South Africa emerged from the tournament as World Champions, the Springbok's head coach Jake White was fired almost immediately after the tournament ended because of his assumed refusal to take desegregation and quota systems seriously in the selection of a national squad.

In the democratisation and post-apartheid era, the South African government was faced with major challenges as to how to advance sport. The need to develop

athletes and create adequate infrastructure and access to resources in Black communities was, and still is painfully evident; at the same time, many senior sports administrators called for the need to develop elite and representational sport further after South Africa was reinstated into international sport in 1991 (for some sporting codes 1992) (Nauright, 1997). In this context, the development of elite sport became an immediate and very important objective for the new South African government. According to Nauright (1997:158) *“Mandela and the ANC invested sport with the role of reaching out to worried whites who feared what majority rule would mean to their ‘way of life’”*.

However, the task of unifying the very divided and segregated sporting structures of the past seemed almost an impossible task in the early 1990s (Nauright, 1997). Talks of how, when and in what form unification of racially (and politically) segregated sporting structures in South Africa started already in 1988, and in 1989 the Interim National Olympic and Sport Congress was formed and led the way until the National Sports Congress (NSC) was established in 1990 (Nauright, 1997). SACOS demanded the end of Apartheid and refused to recognise NSC and continued to work under the banner of ‘no normal sport’; leading to a situation where *“the NSC and white [sporting] bodies quickly outmanoeuvred SACOS and, as a result, the sporting boycott disappeared rapidly in the first few months of 1992”* (Nauright, 1997: 159). SACOS continued to demand the political and official end of Apartheid prior to creating new sporting structures and engaging in representational sport internationally (Nauright, 1997). Due to this, non-racial structures, like SACOS, were finally included in ‘establishment’ structures, and NSC became the umbrella organisation for South African sport, under the control of the Department of Sport and Recreation (Nauright, 1997).

Cricket was the first sporting code to achieve ‘unity’ in formal and official structures when the United Cricket Board of South Africa (CBSA) was formed in June 1991 (Nauright, 1997). However, in many cases the readmission of South Africa into international competitive sport happened prior to the formal establishment of non-racial formal representative organs (Nauright, 1997). For

example, the newly formed National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NOCOSA) was not even recognised as a national Olympic Committee when the IOC readmitted South Africa to the Olympic Movement in 1992 (Nauright, 1997).

Following the democratisation of South Africa, and the re-admittance of the country to the international sporting community, the ANC government was also faced with the task of establishing new policies and laws concerning the promotion and administration of sport. Under the ANC government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) sport was conceptualised as one of the key vehicles for creating the new 'rainbow nation' of South Africa (Nauright, 1997). Sport, RDP stated, should be an inclusive part of all development programmes in the country, particularly in those programmes aimed at youth culture and programmes (Nauright, 1997). Nauright (1997: 161) argues that *"under the ANC government, sport for the urban poor is embedded in an old liberal ideology which stresses the benefits of recreation in combating juvenile delinquency, and as a method of social control in densely populated areas"*. As a result the 1995 "White Paper on Sports and Recreation" prioritised the role of sport in combating the inequalities of the past, through emphasising the importance of setting up sporting infrastructure in 'disadvantaged areas', promote mass participation and lastly, using Affirmative Action frameworks to *"[redress] racial, gender and demographic imbalances"* (Nauright, 1997:163).

Since the 1990s, South African sport has been wrought with power struggles, organisational restructuring and racially representational politics. Despite the centrality of sport in 'unity' and 'rainbow nation' discourses, sport participation and success remains deeply raced and classed (and gendered as shall be shown in the next section). According to 1997 statistics, the sport industry contributes about 1,9% (R 11,3 Billion) to Gross Domestic Product and it provides employment (full- and part-time) for almost 50 000 people (Sport Science and Information Agency, 1997). Nonetheless, *"most schools sport faculties are at traditionally white schools and are maintained by the school"* (Sport Science and Information Agency, 1997:10). Moreover, Cora Burnett (2003) claims that 67% of South African 'elite'

athletes come from middle- to upper- class backgrounds, whereas only 10% are from low-income or 'poor' backgrounds. Moreover, athletes from the lower socio-economic classes predominate and mainly take part in team sports like football, handball, volleyball, athletics and weightlifting (Burnett, 2003). Burnett (2003:20) goes on to suggest that "[the] majority of African athletes perceive the lack of financial support (91%), scientific assistance (82%), training and competitive opportunities (80%), expert coaching (63%) and social support (56%) as stumbling blocks in their athletic careers. These perceptions are substantiated by the fact that only a small percentage (13%) indicated that they were professional athletes or partially (21%) earned a living through sport".

Nauright (1997:180-181) states that "making the nation through sport in South Africa is not as straightforward as in many other 'nations', as the imagined national community of South Africa means many things to many people and there is still no image of one South Africa with which all South Africans can identify". Efforts and discourses that situate sport a symbol of the unified and democratic South Africa may be symbolically important in uniting and building a South African nation, however, such discourses fail to take the lived experiences of sport participation into consideration. Established by Colonialism and White rule and perpetuated and heightened through Apartheid, the gross racial, class and gendered inequalities in South African sport prevail and limit the opportunities for grassroots and elite participation in sporting codes for the majority of South Africans.

Conclusion

This chapter has, thus far, provided a presentation of the making of modern sports in South Africa, and has shown that although many sport codes were introduced through British colonialism, sports quickly became adopted by South Africans and infused with new cultural and political meanings. A study of South African sports shows clearly the level to which sport can be used as a political tool to both divide and unify a diverse people. Although many South African sports,

especially football, cricket and rugby, have served to engrain racialised masculine discourses and perpetuated White, male hegemony, sport has also served as a vehicle for opposing racial inequalities. It is undoubtedly true that the anti-Apartheid sports movement played a significant role in fuelling anti-Apartheid sentiments across the world. Perhaps because of this, sports have been important in the imagination of the South African nation since 1994, and huge efforts have been put into diversifying sports along racial lines. Inequalities persist, however, and many sports are still considered to 'belong' to a particular racial group. Because of the prioritisation of redressing racial inequalities, women's sports participation remains largely invisible in the history of South African sports, and as the next section will show, women face major racial, gendered and class barriers to participation.

2.5 WOMEN AND SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

"Very little has been written on the history and sociology of women's sport in South Africa as it has not been seen as important as men's sport"

(J. Nauright, 1997:20)

Since the 1980s sporting women in South Africa have received a lot more attention than previously, but it is only since the late 1990s that research on women in sports has been taken seriously by sociologists and other researchers (Jones, 2003). Although much still remains uncovered and unpublished, the contributions made by Andre Odendaal (2008), Cora Burnett (2001, 2002, 2003), Jennifer Hargreaves (1994,1997), Cheryl Roberts (1992, 1993, 1994, 1995), Denise Jones (2001, 2003, 2004), Cynthia Pelak (2005, 2006, 2009, 2010) and Martha Saavedra (2004, 2005, 2009) have provided a sound base from which to proceed with further research and writing. That being said, sociological studies of women, sportbodies and sexuality are completely absent from South African sport studies, as most of what has been written concerning women and sports presents only historical analyses of racial and gender inequalities. As a result the following sections present a historical account and current state of women's sports in

South Africa, but does not offer South African material that relates to the feminist theories of sexuality, surveillance and empowerment outlined in the previous chapter. A few references will however be made do to these theories by drawing on findings from my previous research projects.

Introduction

Organised sports in South Africa are deeply classed, raced and gendered (Hargreaves, 1997). Legacies of colonialism and Apartheid continue to shape access to participation, sporting facilities and resources at all levels of organized sports. Although South Africans in general are sports 'crazy', mass participation is limited and highly contested (Pelak, 2009), and sports leadership, administration and participation is dominated by men (Burnett, 2002) According to Cora Burnett (2002) only 21% (2,5 million) of South African women participate in sports, whereas 40% of men do.

Burnett asserts that a wide array of obstacles collaborate to bar women from sports participation, but asserts that the *“main obstacles to taking part in sport or for dropping out were identified as ideological (role as wife and mother and patriarchal authority), structural (lack of user-friendly facilities, transport and sponsorship) and environmental (lack of safety to travel, or in training)”* (Burnett, 2001:76). Women's domestic and reproductive responsibilities, founded in a gendered division of labour (Roberts, 1992) cause sports participation to receive low priority, and causes high drop- out rates (Roberts, 1992; Pelak, 2009). Pelak (2009) suggests that one of the major constraints on women's (and men's) effective participation is caused by the vast racial and geographical inequalities concerning access to facilities and resources; most quality sporting facilities are located in white, urban areas, making transport concerns a major problem for many South Africans (Pelak, 2009). However, she also notes that *“the rise in the level of gender based violence in South Africa since 1994 surely constrains all women's and girls' movement through public space”* (Pelak, 2009:105). For many women, walking home from training sessions and matches poses a real problem,

as they feel they are putting themselves at risk by walking outside after dark (Haugaa Engh, 2007).

Although South African women in general are marginalised in relation to sports development, Hargreaves reminds us about the “*extraordinary diversity of South African women*” (1997:201). Central here is a recognition of the fact that while sports initiatives in South Africa are focused towards the male population, one must not attempt to treat South African women as a homogenous category; “*gender subordination is not uniform for all women, and there are conflicts between different groups of women, as well as between men and women*” (Hargreaves, 1997:201). Despite the diversity of women’s socio- economic positions within South Africa, Hargreaves (1997) maintains that Black women are less privileged than White women in relation to access to sporting facilities and supporting resources, and that “*current gender ideologies and harsh forms of male domination in African communities, rooted in traditional and colonial forms of patriarchy, are material forces which subordinate women and prevent them from taking part in sport*” (Hargreaves, 1997:202). Burnett (2001), adding to this, proposes that the lack of Black female sporting role models impacts negatively on Black women’s sporting access and participation. Female South African ‘sports stars’ are mainly white (for example Penny Heyns, Elana Meyer, Amanda Coetzer and Zola Budd) (Burnett, 2002). Although footballers like Desiree Ellis, Portia Modise and most recently Noko Alice Matlou, have received a fair amount of publicity and recognition, it is doubtful that these women can be considered mainstream (malestream) sports stars.

However, while being attentive to racial inequalities and differences in South African women’s sporting lives is of insurmountable importance, Hargreaves argues that in research and writing we must be careful not to present neo-colonial interpretations that reproduce “*a stark and rigid dichotomy between the two groups [Black women and White women]... which essentializes the position of African women by representing them as uniformly backward, generally poor, illiterate, oppressed by cultural, class, gender, tribal and religious ideologies, and*

powerless” (Hargreaves, 1997:201-202). As a result, analyses of South African women and sport need to consider seriously the intersections of gender, race and class, and pay close attention to the ways in which recent class formations and developments have produced a setting where class positions and realities are now argued to be of as much importance as race (Hargreaves, 1997).

Women’s sport during colonialism and apartheid

The colonial imperative for promoting sport and recreation in the British colonies was closely linked to the British public system, and aimed to instil Victorian notions of ‘gentlemanliness’. Andre Odendaal (2008:4) states that *“from Rugby and other public schools came the notion that exercise and sport were essential in shaping young British boys into muscular Christians and imperialists, destined to lead the world in an age of Empire and expansion”*. In this view, sport and exercise was seen to toughen and teach skills and restraint to prepare young British boys for ‘serving the nation’ (Odendaal, 2008). For women, however, sport participation in the Victorian age was frowned upon, and deemed deviant (Odendaal, 2008). Women were thus marginalised from sport participation, justified through so-called ‘bio-medical’ discourses that argued that sport was not suited for the biology of ‘the weaker sex’ as it could harm their reproductive capacities (Odendaal, 2008). However, as the suffragette movement grew, reformers (such as Lillian Faithful, Louisa Lumsden, Frances Dove and Madame Bergman-Osterberg) *“turned the old argument around and said that far from hampering girl’s education, exercise enhanced their effectiveness. If they were fit, girls could endure, without damage, the solid strain of learning”* (Odendaal, 2008:5). As a result of pressures, sport and exercise began to be included in the schooling of young British girls; and the first sports to gain popularity among women were croquet, badminton, tennis and golf (Odendaal, 2008).

These ideas concerning the value of sport and exercise became an integral part of colonial education also in South Africa, but initially, women’s sport was frowned upon just as it was in England (Odendaal, 2008). Thus, organised women’s sport

emerged quite late in South Africa; in fact, South Africa seems to have been lagging behind the other colonies in establishing women's sport (Odendaal, 2008). The first women's national sport tournament in South Africa was the 'Ladies' championship in golf in 1909 (Odendaal, 2008). For Black South African women, access to sport participation was more problematic than for their white counterparts; as they *"belonged no only to the weaker sex, but also an inferior 'race'"* (Odendaal, 2008:8). In accounting for the late development of women's sport in South Africa, Odendaal argues that the 'Black Peril' hysteria that prevailed in the early 1900s in South Africa functioned to hamper sport participation for women because *"the large black male population in South Africa was seen as a threat to colonial womanhood... [t]his would have served as a restraint to loosening of dress and exercise taboos in the South African master/servant context"* (2008:13).

Thus, while colonial discourses surrounding notions of 'gentlemen' and 'ladies' restrained the development of women's sport in South Africa, some provisions for sport participation were made for, mostly white, women during the early 20th century (Odendaal, 2008). Odendaal (2008) for example, has provided an excellent outline of the development of women's cricket in South Africa throughout the 20th century. He argues that women cricketers *"operating on the margins of the men's South African cricket establishment... were involved in a range of activities, kept efficient records and were creative in fund-raising (although forever in need) and were able to leverage facilities and some support from men's cricket and local government"* (Odendaal, 2008:26).

Though informed by colonial notions of sport, race and gender, the NP Apartheid government did not completely alienate women from the practice sport (Saavedra, 2004). Sport being a key part of the schooling system in South Africa, girls, just like boys, were encouraged and required to partake in school sport until graduation (Saavedra, 2004). However, through the institutionalised racism and sexism that left non- white schools almost devoid of sporting infrastructures, Black girls and women had few opportunities to organised sport participation

(Hargreaves, 1997). Hargreaves (1997:196) succinctly sums up the provision of sport for non- white women; *“Gender discrimination, combined with racial discrimination, created a massive problem which stemmed the growth of all non-White women’s sports... there were a tiny number of courts and pitches specifically for female sports in non-White areas, and men had priority use of shared facilities”*. In general, women were not, to any large degree involved in sport during the Apartheid era and very little is known about the few, and exceptional, Black women who did participate (see for example Jones, 2004) (Hargreaves, 1997). Some white women athletes, like the well- known Zola Budd, opted to leave South Africa and obtain British passports in order to compete in international competitive sport. According to Hargreaves (1997:197) athletes like Budd fulfilled *“the ideological stereotype of the uninformed, innocent young woman, whose love of sport and precocious talent transcended the considerations of racism”*.

National policies on women’s sports since apartheid

Since the 1990s there has been a massive move towards anti- racism and anti- sexism in South Africa, largely as a part of the strategy to deal with the legacy of colonialism and Apartheid. Hargreaves (1997) argues that despite the way in which sports have been restructured in South Africa since the 1990s, the efforts and resources put into developing women’s sports do not match that put into men’s sports. Although sports have been officially recognised as an important avenue in the nation building, sport development work continues to prioritise male sports (Hargreaves, 1997). As was the case during the anti-Apartheid struggle, race seems to be considered a more important axis of discrimination and inequality. There is also a neglect of the ways in which race and gender issues intersect in the lives of South African women and men (Pelak, 2009). Pelak argues that another reason for the neglect of women’s sports nation-building efforts was related to the fact that *“women’s sports...have not been extensively commercialised and are thus not recognized as revenue producing”* (Pelak, 2006:379).

According to Denise Jones (2003) there is little evidence of the Affirmative Action Policy of 2000 having an impact on the representation of women on National and regional teams (Jones, 2003). Although an increase since the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, only 40% of the South African athletes at the Athens Olympics in 2004 were women; despite the fact that the Affirmative Action Policy of 2000 stipulates that regional and national teams must have 50% representation of Affirmative Action Groups (Burnett in Jones, 2003). Jones, in collaboration with Jennifer Hargreaves (2001), further claim that the representation of women in national sport and recreation institutions is dismal; in 2001 only four of ten executive committee members of National Olympic Confederation of South Africa (NOCSA) were women, two of eight elected members to serve on the National Sports Council (NSC) were women, only one of nine provincial ministers were women and only 65 of the 140 federations affiliated to the NSC had established gender desks.

As part of an effort towards building specific strategies and policies on women and sport in South Africa the NSC and the Department of Sports and Recreation in 1996 established a national strategy towards Women and Sport in South Africa (WASSA) (Jones, 2003) and by the end of 1997 all provinces had elected WASSA committees (Hargreaves, 2000). WASSA *“was the first structure ever to be established in SA for the sole purpose of promoting sport among women and girls”* (Jones, 2003:138). After WASSA started establishing programmes and projects confusion arose between WASSA structures and the national federations as to what their respective responsibilities were; a SASC sponsored workshop in Sandton in 2001 attempted to rectify this through re-addressing strategies, but shortly after the conference was closed, the WASSA chairperson resigned and WASSA effectively ceased to operate (SRSA, 2003).

The move from WASSA to SAWSAR has not only been a response to changes in national structures organising sports and recreation in South Africa, it also shows a firmer and more elaborate commitment to gender equality and women's participation and needs. SAWSAR is much more detailed about the entails of

gender equality and manages to go beyond participation and leadership in defining what is meant by gender equality. However, the 2003 working document is the most recent statement on SAWSAR policy and it is thus impossible to examine the impact and scope of official SAWSAR strategy, especially after the disestablishment of SASC in 2005. Since the restructuring of sports and recreation in South Africa following the 2005 South African Sports Council Act Repeal Act and the National Sports Council Amendment Bills of 2006 little information exists about the future of SAWSAR in relation to the new SRSA and SASCO structures.

2.6 WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN SOUTH AFRICA

"The first thing evident about women's football in Africa is its absence in research and documentary materials."

(Nauright, 1997:226)

It is against this backdrop of rapidly changing structures, policies and power relations in South African sports that women's football has developed, and persists to establish itself as a legitimate sport for women. Women's football in South Africa, apart from being near invisible in popular culture and media, is a under researched field. As a result, this section of my literature provides a very limited representation of the game, as so much is yet to be uncovered. To equip the reader with a in- depth understanding of the development and current state of women's football in South Africa, this section starts by tracing the development of football (for men) on South African soil throughout colonial times before it ventures into an exploration of the women's game. I do this to emphasise the role football has played in South African society, and to show the historical roots of the gendered and raced constraints that women footballers experience today. Drawing on the works of Pelak and Saavedra, as well as my own research, I then go on to provide a description of the material and ideological constraints that shape women's access to football today.

The emergence and establishment of football in South Africa

Football, it is argued, is the most popular sport in South Africa (Nauright, 1997). Despite this, Nauright (1997), argues that *“the history of soccer is the great unwritten history of sports in South Africa”* (1997:101). Like other colonial sports it was part of the colonial project, and through the organisation of ‘sporting tours’, football, like rugby and cricket, became a way of cementing ties with the European ‘home’ (Nauright, 1997). The first recorded football match was played in Pietermaritzburg in 1866 (Nauright, 1997 and Alegi, 2004). However, by 1900 football was the only sport played by White South Africans that did not acquire elite status; rather, football was played mainly by working class whites, Indians and Africans (Nauright, 1997). Alegi (2004:16) suggests that the temporality of white football in South Africa was tied to the popularity of the game among the black population and that *“the strong influence of indigenous sporting traditions on black South Africans’ acceptance of British football fostered a perception of soccer as plebeian and black and rugby as patrician and white”*. As such, he argues, rugby was more readily available for *“the construction of exclusionary social boundaries based on race, class, culture, and gender”* (Alegi 2004:16-17).

Due to the fact that football is a quite inexpensive and ‘easy’ to play, the game developed quickly, and gained massive popularity in African popular culture and imagination (Nauright, 1997; Alegi, 2004). Football developed earliest in Durban, and the formation of Durban District Native Football Association in 1916 marked the start of organised football for Black South Africans (Alegi, 2004). For many businessmen in Durban football seemed a less volatile alternative to stick fighting, and they thus supported the development of football among urban migrant workers (Nauright, 1997).

In the 1890s football spread and became popular also in Johannesburg, here, as in Durban, the sport was closely linked to the political and educated elite (Nauright, 1997). Nauright (1997) suggests that a reason for this is that *“for educated men...sports administration provided one of the few outlets, outside of work on*

joint councils or local advisory boards dominated by whites, for African men to practice leadership skills” (1997:106). However, the formal organization of football in the Johannesburg/Witwatersrand area only became a fact after the end of the First World War (Alegi, 2004). The first formal organisation took place on mine compounds; with matches and competitions formally supported by White compound managers (Alegi, 2004). Through these processes, Alegi (2004:47) argues, football was effectively ‘Africanised’ and there emerged “*a specifically African subaltern football culture*” as the game continued to grow in importance for the urbanised Black population.

According to Alegi (2004) a new era for South African football began in the inter-war years as the game gained popularity also in Indian and Coloured areas, and matches between African, Coloured and Indian teams occurred more frequently. In addition, the game started to take on a more ‘African’ character through the inclusion of traditional religious specialists in spectatorship and pre-match preparations (Alegi, 2004). In the face of massive urbanization, a growing manufacturing economy and improved popular press coverage, by the end of World War II, football became the “*leviathan of black sport*” (Alegi, 2004:63).

Due to football's immense popularity, professional leagues were formed in South Africa in the 1960s, and the staging of well attended township matches offered opportunities for “*political leaders to address mass audiences without the necessity of trying to obtain a police permit, which for many anti-apartheid groups was not likely to be granted anyway*” (Nauright, 1997:121). The multi-racial professional football league became so popular and was seen to pose such a threat to the NP regime that it was shut down after only five years (Saavedra, 2004). Anti-Apartheid struggles were also forged under the purview of organised football in South Africa. In 1952 the non-racial South African football Federation (SASF) was established, and it emerged to challenge the dominance and politics of the white-dominated Football Association of South Africa (FASA, established in 1892) (Saavedra, 2004). SASF sought to put pressure on the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the Confederation Africaine de Football (CAF,

established in 1957) to expel FASA and recognize SASF as the South African representative (Saavedra, 2004). CAF officially expelled South Africa in 1961, but FIFA did not expel the country for discriminatory policies until 1964 (Saavedra, 2004). At both national and international levels Black South African football played a central and important role in anti- Apartheid struggles and the sports boycott movement. Following the demise of Apartheid and racially segregated sport in South Africa, the newly formed South African Football Association (SAFA) was readmitted into FIFA in 1992, where it played a key role in pushing for the acknowledgement and recognition of African and South American football within FIFA structures (Saavedra, 2004).

The development of women's football

With regard to the development of women's football in South Africa, and on the African continent at large, Saavedra (2004), argues that one of the main obstacles to the development of the women's game is the extreme popularity of the men's game on the continent. Because of this, according to Saavedra (2004:225) *"women's football has been met with skepticism, neglect and sometimes outright hostility"*. Such scepticism and neglect of women's football is often rooted in ideas about 'African indigenous cultures'. According to Saavedra (2004) these arguments essentialise 'African culture' and do not offer a full understanding, due to the fact that they fail to take global and local political and economic contexts into consideration. She asks whether *"in the context of football is the situation for women in Africa more the result of a hierarchy that has held all of African football well behind Europe and Latin America in a predicament that is only now beginning to change?"* (Saavedra, 2004:243).

Due to the racist and sexist school sport policies of the Apartheid government, football was not readily available for South African girls; they were encouraged to take part in more 'ladylike' sports like netball, tennis, hockey, athletics, softball and volleyball (Saavedra, 2004). Thus creating a situation where women competing in so-called feminine- appropriate sports (like netball and hockey)

were met with less resistance and scepticism than those competing in male sports like football. Pelak (2010) maintains, however, that White, middle-class women started playing and organising football as early as the late 1960s. According to Saavedra (2004) the South African Women's Football Association (SAWFA), an organization controlled by White women, though being open to both white and Coloured women, was formed in 1974. Interestingly, Pelak (2010) claims that SAWFA, despite being an organisation controlled by White, middle-class women, was in fact a racially inclusive organisation, and thus contravened Apartheid sports policies concerning racially segregated sports competitions and organisations. This, Pelak (2010) claims, went unnoticed because women's football as a sport was too small and insignificant to obtain much attention by people on the outside of the sport. The fact that White middle-class women gained access to football organisations and competitions at an early stage suggests that racial and class positions have been crucial for women's participation in football (Pelak, 2010). Due to their socio-economic status White, middle-class women had fewer 'hurdles' to overcome than their black and working-class counterparts, and were probably also inspired, by the achievements of feminist movements in North America and Europe in the 1970s (Pelak, 2010).

In some locations SAWFA was not the only organising structure of women's football, in Cape Town for example, two distinct and racially separate structures existed; Cape Western and Western Province (Pelak, 2010). Using archival records of women's football, Pelak (2010) asserts that both these structures sent provincial teams to compete at the SAFWA Interprovincial tournaments held annually between 1975 and 1990. This shows that despite the racial inclusivity of SAWFA, separate racial structures did exist; and whereas several all-White teams at the SAWFA tournament, no all-Black teams was ever registered to compete (Pelak, 2010).

Despite these being national tournaments, the hosting seems to have rotated mainly between Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban, suggesting that in its

early forms, women's football was largely an urban phenomenon (Pelak, 2010). The organisation of women's football in other South African provinces only started to develop in a formal manner in the 1990s (Saavedra, 2004). With democratisation and increased efforts towards gender equality and equity, women's football gained momentum in the 1990s, and in 1991 Black township women formed the South African Women's Soccer Association (SAWSA)(Saavedra, 2004). The emergence of Black women's clubs, teams and organisations sparked a massive increase in participation, and whereas there were only 6 registered teams in the Western Province in 1991, as many as 22 teams were registered in 2000 (Pelak, 2010:67). With the influx of Black women, more matches and tournaments started being held in townships and non- white areas, which according to Pelak (2010) lead White women to abandon the sport due to fears of travelling to, and in, such unfamiliar areas.

In the 1990s the democratization process in South Africa was underway, and new structures and organisations administering sport were set up in order to create a racially inclusive administration of sport (Saavedra, 2004). The 'unification of sporting structures was not a pain-free process, and due to internal power struggles both SAWFA and SAWSA were *"dissolved, and existing local clubs and emerging new teams were reorganized under an appointed committee, which eventually became the South African Women's Football Association (SAWFA)"* (Saavedra, 2004:244). Following from the creation of SAWFA non- racial competitive league structures were set up, and in May 1993, in Johannesburg, the first Senior Women's National Team (nicknamed Banyana Banyana) was selected (Saavedra, 2004). Unfortunately, internal power struggles persisted within the new SAWFA structure, and when Banyana Banyana failed to qualify for the 1997 Women's World Cup, SAFA dissolved the 'new' SAWFA organisation (Saavedra, 2004). Both Saavedra (2004) and Pelak, (2010) suggest that the breakdown of SAWFA and the subsequent incorporation of women's football into SAFA structures was a direct result of the problems and concerns outlined by the Pickard Commission report of 1997. The Pickard commission was set up to investigate claims concerning financial mismanagement and sexual harassment

on the part of male owners, managers and leaders within women's football in the mid 1990s (Pelak, 2010). The commission found that SAFA had been negligent in responding to the allegations and reports made by women's football clubs and teams, and advised SAFA to increase the allocation of funds for women's football and to work harder at creating adequate structures for the development on women's football (Pelak, 2010). SAFA as a result organised two separate women's football Indabas, and finally claimed full control over women's football and its structures in 2000 (Pelak, 2010). A women's steering committee was set up as a part of SAFA structures, and SAFA became the official organizer of women's football nationally (Saavedra, 2004).

In 2001 a new phase of women's football in South Africa begun when the SAFA Sanlam National Women's League was launched (Saavedra, 2004). The league was comprised of more than 300 teams, and the top teams in each province competed annually in the Sanlam Halala Cup tournament (Saavedra, 2004). The establishment of the national league and the Halala Cup was crucial in developing women's football, as it provided a space for regular and national competition, serving to keep current national team players fit, while at the same time providing a space for new talent to be discovered (Saavedra, 2004). The founding of the Sanlam league marked the entry of corporate sponsorship into women's football, and Vodacom, Cadbury, and Nike soon followed Sanlam as sponsors of women's football.

ABSA and SASOL, following the signing of an expansive sponsorship contract in the beginning of 2009, are now the official supporters of women's football in South Africa. ABSA supports the regional 'development' leagues (named the ABSA league) and corresponding tournaments, and their contribution amounts to about R20-million (Erasmus, Media Club South Africa 20/02/2009). SASOL has come onboard to support the high-level league as well as the national teams; they have entered a four-year contract to support the women's game (Erasmus, Media Club South Africa 20/02/2009). Following the involvement of SASOL, and the launch of the SASOL league, women's teams across South Africa have received

much needed support in the form of transport allowances and equipment, the national team has also increasingly started to take part in overseas friendlies and competitions (Clark, Mills and Haugaa Engh, 2009).

The current state of women's football

The South African national teams have performed to new heights in the past few years; the senior team Banyana Banyana finished second in the Confederation of African Football (CAF) African Women's Championship in 2008, and the national under-20 team, Basetsana, won the Women's Championship of the Council of Southern Africa Football Associations, for the third consecutive time. A big achievement for women's football in South Africa was also the crowning of Banyana Banyana striker Noko Alice Matlou as the 2008 CAF Woman Footballer of the Year (Erasmus, Media Club South Africa 20/02/2009). Despite this, women's football remains marginalised from the South African 'sporting core' (Messner, 2002). This marginalisation is particularly evident when examining the football-craze that is taking the country by storm in preparation for the 2010 FIFA World Cup (for men) later this year. Only one woman, Desiree Ellis, has been appointed as an official FIFA Football Ambassador and spokesperson for the tournament, and no women's teams or clubs in Cape Town have been asked to contribute to the success and organisation of the tournament thus far (Clarke, Mills and Haugaa Engh, 2009). While women coaches, administrators, referees and players are expecting that the World Cup will have a positive impact on South African football; they do not believe that women's football will reap any of these benefits (Clark, Mills and Haugaa Engh, 2009).

Despite the recent sponsorships by ABSA and Sasol, women's football in South Africa is still struggling to 'make ends meet', and women's football remains under-funded, both at local, provincial and national levels. The Banyana Banyana team does not, by far, receive equal remuneration to the Men's National Team (Bafana Bafana) and while the men get to keep their national team playing kits, the women have to return theirs after each match (Saavedra, 2004). In the past few

years there have been numerous attempts to set up a national competitive and professional league for women efforts however, have yet to show results, meaning that women who wish to play football professionally have to migrate overseas to do so. Nonetheless, South African girls and women are continuing to play football, and according to Saavedra (2004) there are at least 50 000 active women football players in South Africa (SAFA have critiqued the methodology behind this number, and claim that at least 200 000 women are playing football in South Africa).

Following a study carried out in South Africa in 1999 and 2000, Cynthia Pelak in 2005 published an article that investigates the constraints experienced by women football players in the Western Cape (Pelak, 2005). Pelak argues that football in South Africa is a quintessential male sport, and goes on to explore how “*South African women are negotiating material and ideological constraints to participate in the historically masculine sport of football*” (Pelak, 2005:53). While the situation has improved somewhat for the national team and some of the elite-level teams, the fact is that much of women’s football remains under-funded and under-resourced. Most teams still struggle to find resources to cover costs in relation to league affiliation, transportation and equipment; and players, coaches and administrators in women’s clubs still do not get paid for their hard work (Clark, Mills and Haugaa Engh, 2009). Research from Cape Town suggests that many women’s football teams cannot afford to register their teams with their Local Football Association (LFA), nor do they have money to cover transport costs (Clark, Mills and Haugaa Engh, 2009). As a result many township teams, despite having enough women and girls that are willing and wanting to play football, do not get opportunities to compete in formal leagues and competitions, and are left to organise matches against other club- and school teams on an ad-hoc basis (Clark, Mills and Haugaa Engh, 2009). In addition, many teams struggle to find adequate facilities for training and matches and many players cannot afford to buy football boots and shin-guards for themselves. As a result, many teams are effectively run on contributions made by the coaches themselves, many of which are under- or unemployed (Clark, Mills and Haugaa Engh, 2009).

Material constraints are undoubtedly tied to class and race positions and do not have the same impact on all sporting women in South Africa, and Pelak (2005) has argued that in the Western Cape, White and Coloured women enjoy better access to sporting facilities and resources than Black women. Marion Keim and Winni Qhuma (1996) support this claim and outline how sporting facilities was a major problem in the establishment of the 'Winnie's Ladies Soccer team', a Black team based in the township of Gugulethu in Cape Town. They explain that the 'Winnes' struggled to access training grounds on which to hold practice sessions and games, because men's clubs prevented the team from using the few football fields and facilities available in Gugulethu (Keim and Qhuma, 1996). Black sporting women also experience ideological constraints differently from their white counterparts, and while many Black women participate in football, the fact remains that there is an immense lack of female Black sporting role models in South Africa; South African sports stars are mainly white (for example Penny Heyns, Elana Meyer, Amanda Coetzer and Zola Budd) (Burnett, 2002). Although footballers like Desiree Ellis, Portia Modise and most recently Noko Alice Matlou, have received a fair amount of publicity and recognition, it is doubtful that these women can be considered mainstream (malestream) sports stars.

In addition to the material constraints that many Black, Coloured and Asian football players experience, there are also important ideological constraints to the development of women's football in South Africa. Pelak argues that *"The strict boundaries between so-called 'male sports' and 'female sports' in South Africa are classic examples of how dominant groups constructs social, physical and cultural boundaries to build collective identities and naturalise their privilege"* (Pelak, 2005:58). Women football players are faced with being marked as outsiders, and their game and their skills are devalued to constitute simply a less valuable alternative to male football (Pelak, 2005). Whereas men are playing football, women are seen to only be "kicking" the ball around, and are thus not taken seriously as football players (Pelak, 2005). However, what it means to be a woman footballer in South Africa is also undoubtedly tied to racial and class positions.

Drawing on her research performed in Cape Town, Cynthia Pelak (2010) suggests that because football is predominantly seen as a Black sport in South Africa, Black women are seen to possess 'natural' football abilities that Coloured and White women do not. Through valuing Black women as 'natural' footballers and situating Coloured women as playing "with heart" women footballers themselves are reiterating essentialist notions of race that maintain football as a Black sport (Pelak, 2010:69).

Like in other parts of the world, women footballers in South Africa draw on the notion of tomboyism to explain their interest and love for football, and they represent themselves as being different and less 'girly' than other girls while growing up (Haugaa Engh, 2007). Upon reaching puberty however, some experience pressures to take up a more feminine- appropriate sport, like netball or hockey, to signal that they have grown out of the 'tomboy phase' (Haugaa Engh, 2007). A refusal to 'grow out of' tomboyism through taking on more feminine appropriate activities is considered a signal of transgressing heterosexual norms, and is thought to be an indication of homosexuality (Haugaa Engh, 2007). This leads to many feeling the need to mark their bodies as feminine, through the use of clothing, make- up and accessories. However, because the 'butch, lesbian' stereotype is so present in South African women's football, some players also feel that by appearing too feminine they are devalued as footballers (Haugaa Engh, 2007).

South African women footballers are intimately involved in forging new images of sporting femininities. Their perseverance and strength posits them as role-models in their own communities, and for many, their identity as footballers allows them to remain distant from the gangsterism, drug abuse and violence that shape many South African communities. Although sport and physical activity can clearly disempower women by reinforcing hegemonic notions of femininity (Maguire and Mansfield, 1998) women experience intense joy, pleasure and satisfaction from participating in the game. Perhaps exactly because of the numerous ideological challenges they face as women football players; many

women associate being on the football field as an experience of freedom; “You are just there to just have fun. Just let your anger out and have fun. You see with soccer, or actually with all sports, you escape” (Haugaa Engh, 2007). For recreational women footballers, in particular, the sport offers an escape from societal expectations of womanhood and femininity; on the field of play they get an opportunity to express their physical selves in ways that are incompatible with respectable femininity (Haugaa Engh, 2007). Lone Friis Thing supports this argument and asserts that “in play of sport women are given the opportunity to go against the expectations of what it is to be female” (2001:6). In doing research with women at the University of Cape Town who play football on a recreational basis, I found that football was a source of immeasurable joy and pleasure in their lives (Haugaa Engh, 2007) and I found evidence to support Hargreaves’ claim that “in general South African women link sport with notions of liberation and enrichment” (1997:205).

2.7 CONCLUSION

Sports have played a multifaceted role in the history of South Africa, and while mass-participation is still divided along racial and gendered lines, sports remain important in popular imagination and discourse. With the advent of the World Cup, sport, and particularly football, has become an important selling point, and South Africans are eager to show their sporting potentials and achievements to the world. Suddenly, South African football has become visible internationally. However, much still remains to be uncovered about the reality of South African sports, and women’s voices, experiences and achievements are particularly underrepresented.

This chapter has shown how South African women have overcome racial and gendered barriers to become active subjects in the sporting world, while also shedding light on inequalities and divisions among women. What is particularly evident however, is the absence of professional women athletes in South Africa. Whereas male athletes receive national status, and male sports teams become

symbols of South African nationhood, professional women athletes remain invisible. This, along with the lack of feminist considerations of women's sports in South Africa raises a number of theoretical questions that have informed my choice of research focus and questions for this thesis;

- Given the symbolism attached to male professional sports in South Africa, how do elite- level women footballers negotiate an athletic subjectivity?
- How do elite- level women footballers in South Africa experience heteronormative discourses, empowerment and surveillance?
- To what extent can Northern- based feminist theories of empowerment and surveillance help explain the experiences of elite- level women athletes in South Africa?

CHAPTER 3:

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND RESEARCH FOCUS

3.1 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I played my first formal football match when I was 6 years old. I was playing for an all-girls team, the very first all-girls team to be established in my hometown of Hønefoss, Norway. Even before I started playing for a team, football was a big part of my life; I grew up attending my older brother's matches and tournaments, while also avidly kicking a ball around whenever I had a chance. I never proceeded to play football at a competitive or professional level, but football has remained a very important part of my life, and I am proud to call myself a footballer. Few weeks of my life have passed without my being on a football field at least once, training or playing a match. Football has provided me with a space to release tension, anger and built-up energy, while also affording me an opportunity to build strength, endurance and an extremely competitive streak. If in other spheres of life I would feel inadequate, or not 'good enough', football was something I could always be proud of, because, even as a girl, I was stronger and 'harder' than most. In fact, during break-time at school the boys would fight to have me in their team, because I had the strongest shot and most precise corner-kick in the primary school.

Being a woman footballer you always get reminded that there is something untypical, unexpected or just a little 'weird' about the fact that you play football. Boys would often tell me that 'girls can't play football' and laugh at me for being such a 'tomboy'. This would hurt, but through proving my ability and skill on the field I gained respect and soon came to be seen as a novelty, which was something I cherished. I enjoyed being different, being good at something I was not supposed to be good at, and I enjoyed surprising people. I grew up as part of the 'Just Do It' generation; I grew up to images of powerful women athletes who

crossed boundaries and set records, I grew up knowing that as a girl I could do it, even if people sometimes told me I 'shouldn't'.

It was against this backdrop that I, almost by coincidence, started thinking about football academically in the final year of my undergraduate studies. In one of my classes I was forced to undertake a minor research project, and as I did not know what to write about, my lecturer (thankfully) suggested I write about football. At first I did not see football as a feminist issue, and I was convinced that I should be studying something 'more important' and meaningful. However, after reading a couple of articles and thinking back on my own experiences I set out to interview a few of my teammates at the UCT women's football team. This first research project was a simple presentation of women's experiences as recreational footballer players, but it showed me other women's experiences were not all that different from mine, and that when it comes to football, being a woman matters.

My first project on women's football was concerned with examining women's experiences as footballers, and sparked a theoretical interest in the contradictory relationship between being a woman and being an athlete. I had personally experienced how this assumed contradiction could lead other people to assume I was either not a 'real' woman, or a 'real' athlete, and I was interested in finding out how other women footballers dealt with this dilemma. I found that despite contradictions and intense stereotyping, women footballers continued doing what they love; they continued because playing football made them feel free, strong and happy. In a way, playing football gave them an opportunity to take a break from academic or personal problems, and it made them feel confident and strong. As a result of these findings and my own experiences, I started examining the ways in which football can empower women through making us feel free, strong and confident in (and about) our physical bodies.

This realisation sparked a further interest in feminist writings on embodiment and empowerment, and I soon found myself immersed in feminist, Foucauldian analyses of docile, disciplined and transgressive female bodies. While reading and

writing about how women's bodies become constructed and shaped through discourses that position them as being different to strong and athletic male bodies, I refused to give up on the idea that sports can be empowering. I was happy to find that several prominent feminists claimed that through sports participation women can challenge these discourses and construct images and ideas of women as physically strong, liberated and empowered. As a result, I developed a new-found theoretical interest in the tensions between empowerment and surveillance in women's sporting lives, out of which the focus for this project was borne.

Researching and talking with the South African women's national team had been a dream of mine long before I started this project, but I never felt quite ready to take on such a challenge, nor was I sure that I would be able to get in contact with the 'right' people. However, while developing the proposal for my Masters research, I realised that through the acquaintances I had made over the past three years of researching and playing football I would be able to get in contact with national team management and ask for permission to interview some of the players. My desire to interview national team players was, on the one hand, motivated by an interest in finding out what it is like to play football as a living, something I had never been able to do. On the other hand, I was interested in 'testing' the hypothesis that football is empowering and liberating, with another population of women players. I already knew that for recreational players as myself, football is a source of pleasure and freedom, and through feminist sport literature I had read about this being the case among footballers at other levels and in other countries. However, I was not convinced that professional sportswomen experience sports in the same way recreational athletes do, and as nothing has been written about the experiences of professional women footballers in South Africa, I decided that the time was ripe for me to step out of my comfort zone and get on a plane to Pretoria.

In May 2009, over halfway through my Masters degree, I started doing part-time work for a Sport-in-Development organisation called SCORE, and my interest in

sport as a tool for empowerment developed further. Through my work for SCORE I read numerous accounts of the liberating and transformative aspects of sport, and though I found this kind of literature illuminating, I was nonetheless concerned about the uncritical use of sport in development work. There seemed to be a sense that through simply getting girls to play sports like football, they would be empowered, their lives would change for the better and unequal gendered power relations would change because women were challenging stereotypes. What I was reading in the so-called development literature did not fit well with what I had uncovered while doing my Masters fieldwork; the literature was portraying a over-simplified portrayal of women's sporting lives; one that did not fit with the experiences of elite-level footballers.

This is the point at which I am formulating this Masters thesis; with a sincere interest in examining the tension, and meaning, of empowerment and surveillance in the lives of elite-level women footballers in South Africa. This project marks the culmination of my feminist interest in sport thus far, but is in no way intended to my be final effort. The work I present here clearly signals the methodological and theoretical concerns that I have grappled with over the past few years, and while my writing is a work-in-progress, I hope that this project will spark interest in further research and writing, if for no one else but myself. My interest in researching and writing about women's football is grounded in my aspirations of contributing to knowledge production that takes South African women's lives and experiences seriously, but relies heavily on the theoretical contributions made by Northern feminists in the field of sport studies. The next section of this chapter will outline the key focus areas and objectives of this research project as they have developed out of an interest in theoretical debates, my personal experience as a footballer as well as my position as an aspiring critical African feminist researcher.

3.2 RESEARCH FOCUS AND KEY QUESTIONS

This thesis has, as outlined in the previous section, emerged out of my personal experiences as a footballer in Norway and here in South Africa, as well as what I have learnt and uncovered from past research endeavours. Most importantly however, this project is focussed on my theoretical interests concerning women's embodiment and empowerment in and through sports. Drawing on what I outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the three issues outlined below have informed my approach to, and specific interest in, women's football in South Africa. These three points respond to what I believe to be a gap in the sociological study, and my own understanding, of women in sport in South Africa.

Research focus:

1. How are elite- level women footballers' experiences different from those of recreational women footballers?
2. How do the intersections of gender/race/class impact on empowerment and surveillance for elite-level women footballers in a South African context?
3. How and to what extent do Northern- based theories of embodiment, empowerment and surveillance in sport relate to the experiences of elite-level women footballers in South Africa?

This thesis aims to examine the intersections and negotiations between surveillance and empowerment as it plays out in the experiences of women footballers in South Africa, through paying specific attention to the unique experiences of elite- level footballers and the intersections of gendered experiences and raced/classed experiences for South African women. The key research questions are drawn from debates posed by Northern- based feminist sports sociologists, and this thesis will thus also comment on the relevance of these theories in a Southern/African context.

Research questions:

1. What do heteronormative constructions of femininity mean for elite- level women footballers in South Africa?
 - What does the assumed tension between femininity and athleticism mean in women's lived experiences?
 - If there are contradictions and tensions, how are these negotiated?
2. What is the relationship between empowerment and surveillance in the lives of elite- level women footballers in South Africa?
 - How does empowerment and surveillance impact on the construction of a feminine athletic?
 - To what extent does football offer an avenue for empowerment and transformation?

Although this chapter (and the previous one) separates discussions of heteronormativity, femininity and athleticism (masculinity) from discussions of empowerment and surveillance, this split is made solely for presentational purposes. The analysis and discussion chapters of this thesis will show how the two focus areas intersect to form a complex discursive terrain through highlighting how discourses of heteronormativity, femininity, masculinity and athleticism open up possibilities for both surveillance and empowerment for women footballers.

CHAPTER 4:

RESEARCH THEORY, METHODOLOGY, AND DESIGN

4.1 FEMINIST FRAMEWORKS AND STANDPOINTS

This section will provide an outline of the most important theoretical frameworks and standpoints that have framed my understanding of knowledge production and research processes. The theories and standpoints presented, are presented as a result of not only my academic feminist training at the African Gender Institute, but also represent viewpoints that I feel best represent the practical experience of research. As such, my understanding of epistemological and methodological theories has been influenced by my own understanding and opinion of what research ‘feels’ like, as well as by curriculums, courses and prescribed readings in undergraduate and graduate courses.

In this chapter I hope to present a fluid and holistic representation of how I view and understand research, knowledge production and feminist agendas. As a gender scholar, my theoretical frameworks are clearly situated within feminist epistemologies, while I also aim to remain critical of the Eurocentric nature of much of this work. As a result, my theoretical battle with feminist epistemologies and theories has culminated in what I would like to refer to as a critical African, post-modern feminist standpoint. The following chapter will outline what I understand this standpoint to be, through presenting theories and debates that have been critical to my understanding of the research process this thesis represents.

The case against positivism

“Feminists have argued that traditional epistemologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, systematically exclude the possibility that women could be ‘knowers’ or agents of knowledge. They claim that the voice of science is a masculine one, that history is written from the point of view of men (of the dominant class and race [an imperial/neo-colonial location]; that the subject of a traditional sociological sentence is always assumed to be a man” (Mbilinyi, 1992:32).

The above point highlights some of the core issues of a feminist critique of ‘traditional’ scientific and positivist epistemologies and methods, a critique that was influential in destabilising the position of the scientific paradigm, at least in the social sciences. Through this critique feminists made new claims concerning knowledge production, by arguing that traditional theories and methods have ignored women’s knowledge by confining ‘scientific research’ to public and professional realms of life (Oakley, 1998:709). A key concern here is a critique of the positivist positioning of the researcher as the expert ‘knower’ and the researched as the ‘object’ of study (Oakley, 1998:710). According to Oakley (1998, 710); *“feminist knowers must reject ‘any mode of explanation which requires or sanctions the imposition upon the female subject of the theorist’s own views as to who she is, what she wants, and what she should have”*. Instead, knowledge productions should be thought of as a relational process: *“all knowing occurs in relation, because it is through contact with others that knowledge claims emerge”* (Gunzenhauser, 2006:622). As such, it remains important to me to remember, in all interactions, that my position, privilege and power vis-à-vis the women I interview is not one of subject/object or expert/object. In fact, I would argue that although I also have knowledge of what it means to be a woman who plays football, this does not mean that my understanding of the politics of this identity is more privileged or ‘expert’ than that of the women I interact with. So while this thesis essentially represents my reading and understanding of their knowledge, I

have tried as much as possible, to frame my analysis as a being one possible way of reading experiences, while not devaluing the truth of women's analysis.

Feminist standpoint theory

Feminist standpoint theory argues that the political project of feminism(s) is justified through the fact that women's unique position in society provides a *"unique and privileged vantage point on male supremacy"* (Hekman, 1997:34). This theory argues, through a Marxist logic, that ruling classes structure the material life of society, and through this they also set limits to what is the 'truth' and 'reality' of society and material structures (Hartsock in Hekman, 1997:345). These truth-claims however, are *"perverse and partial"* in that they are ideologically fashioned to defend the hierarchical society's status quo (Hekman, 1997:343). As a result of this hierarchical positioning in society, the oppressed group (groups), through struggles, achieves a different view of the reality on material life; a view that, according to standpoint theorists, is more true and 'real' than that of the ruling classes (Hekman, 1997). The logic then, is that through taking the vantage point of women seriously in scientific research, feminists can uncover the 'true' facts about material life and thus also challenge the validity of patriarchal social relations.

Standpoint theory however, lost much of its initial popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As so-called Third World Feminists began to criticise their 'sisters in the North' of colonising the Third World Woman, and postmodern theory increased in popularity and usage for feminists, feminist standpoint theory was largely abandoned in favour of less universalistic theories.

Issues of Difference and Victimisation

Chandra Mohanty remains one of the most influential thinkers within what many choose to call 'Critical Third World Feminism'. Her thesis, published in the late 1980s, formed part of a postmodernist critique of Western Feminist theory and writing for its assumed inability to take issues of difference seriously. Mohanty

(1988) argues that Western feminists effectively colonised 'third world women' by representing them as a homogenous group. Moreover, she claims that *"the assumption of woman as an already constituted and coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied universally and cross- culturally"* (Mohanty, 1988:64). In addition, Mohanty (1988) argues that the construction of women as members of a 'universal sisterhood' is in fact a sisterhood with imperialist intentions. She claims that many Western feminists represent Third World Women in very specific (and neo- colonial) ways through constructing *"third world women' as a homogenous 'powerless' group often located as implicit victims of a particular cultural or socio- economic system"* (Mohanty, 1988:66).

The case against standpoint theory then, was largely concerned with issues of difference. The authenticity and primacy of a feminist standpoint is discarded by pointing to the fact that the universal category 'woman' does not exist, because women are positioned differently within material life in relation to their positions within hierarchies of class, race and ethnicity. The truth- claim of feminist standpoint theory was thus invalidated through pointing to the fact that no such one standpoint exists in 'reality'.

Standpoints as Discursive Formations

A further critique of standpoint theory emerged with the surfacing of postmodernist and poststructuralist thought within feminist theories. The postmodernist claim against standpoint theory is concerned with standpoint theory's contention that while the ruling class perspective on material life is ideological, perverse and partial; that of the oppressed is not (Hekman, 1997).

Postmodernism emerged in the mid-nineteenth century as a critique of modernist and structuralist analyses, and it formed part of *"a movement from an absolutist, subject- centred conception of truth to a conception of truth as situated, perspectival and discursive"* (Hekman, 1997:356). In the postmodernist logic all

knowledge, and all standpoints, are discursive formations of a specific situatedness or positioning. As a result, all vantage points on 'reality' are ideological, and thus no one standpoint or position can be argued to be more 'truthful' than others. Postmodernism then invalidates a core aspect of feminist standpoint theory by pointing out the fact that the standpoint of the oppressed (or women) is no less partial or ideological than that of the ruling class. For many feminists, this meant that standpoint theory could no longer justify the political project of feminism, and standpoint theory thus lost much of its previous 'fan-base'.

A postmodern feminist standpoint

As a response to postmodernist claims against feminist standpoint theory, Susan Hekman (1997) has attempted to reconceptualise the core tenets of the theory to accommodate questions of difference and discursive formations of knowledge. It is her claim that postmodernist thought was never foreign to, or incompatible with, standpoint theory in its initial form (Hekman, 1997).

Hekman (1997) suggests that *"feminist standpoint theory defines knowledge as particular rather than universal; it jettisons the neutral observer of modernist epistemologies; it defines subjects as constructed by relational forces rather than as transcendent"* (Hekman, 1997:356). She argues that in its initial formulation, standpoint theory incorporated the notion of knowledge as a situated, discursive formation (Hekman, 1997). Inherent in this, she suggests, is the idea that no standpoint can be privileged over another, and that the feminist standpoint is no less ideological and partial than other standpoints (Hekman, 1997). Because of this standpoint theory can incorporate analyses and understandings of difference through acknowledging that different positions in society produce different 'truths', none of which are more truthful than others (Hekman, 1997). As a result, no one feminist standpoint exists, rather, there are multiple versions of this standpoint, all dependent on the positioning of the subject in question.

The case for insisting further use of standpoint theory then, rests on two qualifications of the theory. Firstly, while it remains clear that no such universal category as 'woman' exists; *"thinking about women many illuminate some aspects of a society that have been previously suppressed by the dominant view"* (Flax cited in Hekman, 1997:359). And secondly, the transformative and political objective of feminism can be retained and justified through thinking of feminist standpoint theory as *"a counterhegemonic discourse that works to destabilize hegemonic discourse"* (Hekman, 1997:355).

Although Hekman is almost completely silent on the topic, I believe that this postmodernist conceptualization of standpoint theory can also be effective in research on, and with, South African women. Hekman does not make it a specific point, but I contend that through the notion of standpoints as discursive and situated formulations, she opens the possibility for a theorising that takes questions of race/ethnicity and class, in combination with gender, seriously. Through emphasising the validity of multiple standpoints the theory can effectively deal with the intersectionality of race/class/gender concerns, while also making tactical collaboration and analysis across divisions possible.

When researching women footballers in South Africa the importance of intersectionality becomes painfully evident; there is no such one group as 'South African women footballers'. Though they might experience some of the same kinds of marginalisation, male- domination and violence, the way in which this marginalisation is felt, how it is played out, and how it is understood depends on positionings within the socio-economic and racial landscape of South Africa. Although women, in general, remain marginalised from the core of football discourse; football is socialised as a Black male sport in South Africa, and thus, Black, Coloured and White women footballers will have very different experiences with, and understandings of, being a black/coloured/white female body entering a space that is discursively (and physically) dominated by Black and male bodies. So, while racial discourses may allow Black women a version of acceptable 'entry', White female bodies are so foreign to discursive constructions of South African

football, and so central to discourses of an acceptable feminine athletic that their presence is more easily acceptable for those outside the football field.

That being said, I believe that due to the discursive and physical male domination of football in South Africa, women's experiences and negotiations carry significance. For one, women's football voices are excluded and overlooked in African social sciences; and secondly, women's experiences with football, because of the male dominated, propose a different way of reading and writing about football in South Africa. In essence, a feminist standpoint in researching women's football in South Africa will bring forth voices and stories that have not been heard previously. A feminist standpoint will also emphasise the fact that women experience the commoditisation, globalisation and corporatisation of football and sports differently from what men do, their stories will give rise to questions and issues that the male- dominated status quo might not have considered.

Ethics of transformation and knowledge production

"For Africans, ethical scholarship is socially responsible scholarship that supports freedom, not scholarship that is free from social responsibility"
(Mama, 2007:23).

Most thinking about research ethics emerges in relation to ideas of 'do no harm', informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. My thinking about the ethics of the research I have undertaken, however, goes beyond these issues (though they will all be noted and elaborated on in the Methodology section of this proposal). The ethical issues I am concerned with now are those that arise from the above epistemological points, and they are primarily concerned with feminist accountability in relation to 'writing for change' and representation of women. Much of what was noted above, and that which is to follow in the next sections, has epistemological and ethical concerns at the core. This section however, will not provide a full discussion of these concerns, but rather point out questions

that have been key in framing my choice of epistemology, methodology and methods.

My first concern lies with the above statement made by Amina Mama (2007). As a feminist researcher, my writing (and my thinking about writing) is deeply committed to social transformation; throughout the research process a key concern for me is to what extent my work and writing contributes to the overall feminist project of ending gender inequality, and to what extent I remain committed to theorising difference. As such, I consider the epistemological points of relational knowledge creation and the feminist standpoints as also being ethical challenges. Thus, I hope that way in which my epistemological standpoints are dealt with in my methodology and choice of methods will be able to cope with these ethical challenges. As stated by Daphne Patai: “Does ‘contributing to knowledge’ justify the utilization of another person for one’s own (academic, feminist) purposes? Is the relationship terminated along with the research?” (Patai, 1991:143). In this research endeavour, that has been a central concern for me. As a feminist researcher I feel a responsibility towards those who agreed to take part in my project, a responsibility to make a contribution to change and transformation. For one, I feel that I have a responsibility to ensure that voices are heard beyond academia. As a result, I have become known as ‘the crazy feminist/gender expert/political lesbian’ at my place of employment, and I have for several months fought a battle to allow for sexuality ‘work’ and ‘talk’ to be an integral part of the life skills programme my organisation provides.

Another issue raised by Patai (1991) concerns the ethics of knowledge production through research. She argues that: *when lengthy personal narratives, in particular, are gathered, an intimacy (or the appearance of intimacy) is generated that blurs any neat distinction between ‘research’ and ‘personal relations’.* We ask of the people we interview the kind of revelation of their inner life that normally occurs in situations of great familiarity and within the private realm. Yet we invite these revelations to be made in the context of the public sphere, which is where in an obvious sense we situate ourselves when we appear with tape recorders and not

pads eager to promote our 'projects', projects for which other people are to provide the living matter" (Patai, 1991:142). While doing research for this thesis, I had many concerns about the private, intimate and difficult information that was shared with me. When one of the interviewees in Cape Town proceeded to tell me about how she has considered, many a time, taking her own life and that she feels deeply depressed and alone, red flags rose in my mind. I was completely unprepared for hearing such things, and I spent days thinking about what had happened and whether I had responded the 'correct' way to what she had told me. Upon ending the interview I struggled to walk away and I felt incredibly uncomfortable with the 'researcher' label I was wearing. This experience still affects me, and it raises concerns for me as to the ethics of the kind of research I am engaged in. Is it ethical to impose yourself the way I did, listen to intimate revelations and then simply walk away, and proceed to use the information given for my own, selfish, purposes? If this is not ethical, how do I justify my desire to continue researching?

My ending- point (for now) thus seems to be that while there is no ethical way of dealing with sharing of very personal information given by a relative stranger; I have no choice but to do so if I have any hope of remaining committed to other concerns. If knowledge production is in fact relational, the revelations of the interview setting might turn out be as revealing for me, as for the research participants. As such, my negotiations with research ethics and epistemological concerns present a complex and difficult situation- one that I am still battling to navigate. Nonetheless, I aim for this thesis to be the first step towards contributing towards transformative, new, knowledge concerning women and sport in South Africa, and while I accept the importance of research and writing for academic purposes, I feel as if there is far more work I can do with this research, outside of academia. I thus wish to continue researching and writing about the issues I raise in this thesis, in order to live up to my own ambitions of contributing to the future acceptance, acknowledgement and celebration of South African women footballers.

4.2 METHDODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section will outline the methodological points that have influenced the formulation of this research project. This includes touching on a range of debates concerning the politics of doing gender research and follow logically from the epistemological position that I embraced in the previous section, as well as the overall aims of this project. The section thus attempts to provide an approach to doing research that is sensitive to concerns about the importance of taking women's standpoints seriously while also being grounded in the belief that all knowledge is situated and partial. Most of these methodological positions have been influenced by feminist critiques of positivist social research. For the purpose of this research project I will thus focus my attention on a consideration of gender analyses, qualitative research, positionality and reflexivity, the micropolitics of research and finally issues of representation and reinscription.

Gender analysis

The research processes I have engaged in to present this thesis has sporting women's experiences at its core. I have aimed to achieve this through making use of a research methodology that takes women's standpoints within sport seriously through providing a gender analysis of the related literature and sporting women's narratives. Gender analysis, as a specific form of social analysis, emerged from the contributions of women's and feminist studies; and was in its initial state formed as a critical approach to research that sought to highlight and deconstruct the meanings and effects of a male bias in social research (Imam, 1997). With time however, gender analyses have become more widespread in use, and no longer form part of only the feminist territory of research.

Gender analysis aims to analyse and examine the *“multiple layers of social relations and identities among women and men, individually and collectively, and the complex interconnections among gender, imperial, class, race- ethnic relations”* (Mbilinyi, 1992: 34). As such, gender analysis, contains a critique of the male domination of

the social sciences, and it draws its inspiration from the feminist quest for women's liberation (Imam, 1997).

Qualitative research

According to Ann Oakley, qualitative research acknowledges the *“authenticity of multiple viewpoints, the role of values, and the subjectivities of both researcher and researched... This position produces feminist research as research advocating ‘an integrative, trans-disciplinary approach to knowledge which grounds theory contextually in the concrete reality of women’s everyday lives”* (Oakley, 1998:713). In the 1960s and 1970s, feminists positioned qualitative approaches to social research as the only way in which to counter and rectify the problems of a male biased social science (Oakley, 1998). They argued that part of the problem stemmed from the reliance on positivist and quantitative forms of knowledge production; as these tended to make women's lives, efforts and experiences invisible (Oakley, 1998). This assumed dichotomy of qualitative and quantitative methods has come under scrutiny in the past few years; because of the way in which the debate itself has overlooked the fact that *“a social and historical understanding of ways of knowing gives us the problem not of gender and methodology, but of the gendering of methodology as itself a social construction”* (Oakley, 1998:707). Moreover, Oakley (1998) argues that in order for social science to be emancipatory, feminists need to refute this dichotomy and work towards generating knowledge that is the result of integrated methods.

This research project is a qualitative analysis of experiences, in that it has attempted to generate knowledge about the meanings and experiences of women's physicality in sport, rather than simply providing a numerical or statistical breakdown of women's sporting lives. Taking women's experiences in sport seriously, I believe that I am obliged to also take their representations of this experience seriously, through looking at how their structure and articulate their personal narratives. This, I believe, will serve the purpose of allowing my research participants to control the direction and content of our encounters. It is

important to note, however, that while I have chosen to make use of a qualitative approach to research, I do not consider qualitative studies to be inherently more 'true' nor feminist than quantitative studies. I consider 'qualitative' as a reference to a choice of research methods, rather than it being an approach to research itself. For the purpose of this research I would have liked to be able to integrate interview material with statistics on participation to provide a fuller view of women's sporting lives in South Africa. However, as I have not been able to come across such statistical data that is recent and relevant, and I do not have the necessary funds to undertake such a research endeavour, I have had to rely on qualitative methods alone.

Situated knowledges , positionality and self- reflexivity

Postmodern feminist standpoint theory argues that all knowledge is situated, partial and positioned. In the previous section of this proposal I provided an outline of this by pointing to how different women's positions (or standpoints) in society leads to different knowledge's and understanding of the material world. Inherent in this, is the postmodernist notion that 'truth' and 'reality' are discursive formations dependent on the position of the subject who constructs them. This idea of knowledge as a situated, discursive formation is as applicable to researchers as it is to 'the researched'.

Feminists have insisted on acknowledging how the researcher impacts on the research process and how the researcher's own experiences will necessarily impact on knowledge production and representation. In this, notions of objective and value free research have been rejected in favour of more reflexive and subjective understandings of the world. According to Haraway; *"Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of object and subject. It allows us to become answerable for what we see"* (Haraway cited in Bhavnani, 1994:28). This acknowledgement of partiality is according to Bhavnani not a methodological problem, but in fact

contributes to more honest and ‘real’ research in that it does not attempt to hide the ‘biases’ and subjectivities of researchers (Bhavnani, 1994).

Due to this, more and more feminists have begun to ‘insert’ themselves into their research and writing by providing critical, self- reflexive accounts of how their positions, biographies and subjectivities impact on the research process (Mbilinyi, 1992). This is argued to contribute to a production of knowledge that is more honest and accountable, in that it does not attempt to hide the ideologies and opinions of the researcher, but provides an opportunity for the reader to critically examine the assumptions and positions that underlie the production and representation of knowledge. In much feminist, and especially anthropological, research, questions of the researcher’s position vis-à-vis the research participants has been of central concern; and many researchers have chosen to view this positionality through a insider/outsider binary. The next few paragraphs will provide a reflexive account of my positioning within this research project through a critique of the insider/outsider binary.

Moments of recognition and dissonance

My rejection of the insider/outsider as useful tool stems from theoretical and practical concerns, and is as such a product of my position as a gender studies student and feminist researcher. I would argue that a theory of research positionality that sees the researcher’s position vis-à-vis the research as a process of moving between nodes of ‘moments of recognition’ and ‘moments of dissonance’ provides a better theoretical and practical consideration of these concerns.

Ever since I started attending ‘research methods’ classes at the University of Cape Town I have taken part in debates concerning insider/outsider positions. Many of these debates I have found to be repetitive, tedious and un-useful, mostly for two reasons. Firstly, the insider/outsider binary perpetuates the structuralist notion of the subject having a fixed and static identity, a notion that is fundamentally

refuted by postmodernist approaches. In order to see the subject as a whole, I would argue that one needs to think of subjectivities as being *“a dynamic process during which individuals take up and change positions in discourses”* (Mama, 1995:89). In this view, the idea of a researcher being either an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’ becomes theoretically and practically impossible. Zillah Eisenstein (2004:61) argues that *“humanity transcends and articulates polyversality simultaneously because no individual is ever completely different or totally the same as another”*. While Eisenstein here proposes a radical view of human, and research, relations, she nonetheless shed lights on what I believe to be a key concern; although I am a researcher, a white one at that, I am also a footballer, and a woman. For me, this means that, at different points, I have different (or no) relational or experiential connection with the women I have interviewed. The degree of this connection is determined not only by who I am, and how my body is read by those I engage with, but also by what we talk about and what experiences we have had. Although I am fundamentally a White, female, European, graduate student, this is not all that I am, and despite the power relations inherent in research contexts I believe that the women I interviewed also saw me for more than my skin, accent, notebook and voice recorder.

Secondly, conversations about insider/outsider positions tend to initiate never-ending debates about the limitations of race/class/gender (to name a few) positions, in which no consensus or agreement can ever be reached. Instead such methodological debates turn into ‘researchers not- anonymous’ sessions in which all in attendance get a chance to name if, and when, they are ‘in’ or ‘out’. For someone interested in discussing the complexities of positionality, these debates were a constant source of frustration and irritation. For a while, I tried convincing myself that I felt this way because I was generally uninterested in listening to other peoples ‘positionality’ issues, as I was more concerned with my own. Through the experience of doing research however, I have become convinced that my frustration was rooted in more than simple boredom and egocentrism.

As a white, European, African based, scholar, researcher and football- playing feminist young woman in South Africa I am often seen as the permanent outsider. My race and country of origin is commonly seen as a sign of me being incapable of fully understanding the lived experiences of South African women. And in many ways this is very true. However, through research I have undertaken since I was an undergraduate student, I have found that in a practical setting, the insider/outsider theory was not a useful way of describing my interactions with research participants. I have taken part in interviews with young women football players from varied and diverse backgrounds, and in all of them I have experienced moments of 'recognition' as well as moments of 'dissonance' in very powerful ways. In many, our shared love for and participation in the game of football has sparked moments of laughter, anger and recognition; in others, such moments occurred on the basis of our 'sameness' as women, as students or as lovers of reggae music and hip-hop.

In other words, moments of recognition would emerge from a diversity of topics, situations and similarities. These moments were fundamental in creating an atmosphere of understanding and care in all the interviews; and I feel that they not only made conversation 'flow' better as they revealed the researcher as a living, eating, and breathing, human being, but they also made me feel more comfortable and at ease with the interview situation. At other times however, I was completely taken aback by my inability to fully comprehend a statement, and argument, an experience, or a word uttered by the research participant. In these moments of 'dissonance' our differences, of whatever nature and form, created moments where the research participant, or I, were completely 'talking past' the other. Sometimes such moments would result in loud laughter from both, or an intense feeling of anxiety on my part. Sometimes, however, these moments created opportunities for both of us to explain 'things' in detail and for us to discuss differences in opinion and experiences in honest ways. As such, like the moments of 'recognition' I feel that these moments of 'dissonance' added value to the interview process as they allowed both of us to present ourselves holistically and honestly.

This theory of moments is not posed to function as an alternative binary; it is in fact not meant to be a binary at all, but rather a theory that allows for a view of interview interactions as being a process, a conversation. I propose this theory to serve two purposes; firstly, to allow a theoretical and methodological consideration of positionality that fully incorporates the complexity and fluidity of a researcher's subjectivities; and secondly, as a tool for talking/writing about research settings in a language that resonates with the actual experience of interviewing.

Power and representation

"...Of the frequent claim that the interview process, as conducted by feminists, is empowering in that it 'gives a voice' to those who might otherwise remain silent, one may well ask: is it empowerment or is it appropriation?" (Patai, 1991:147)

In any kind of research, issues of power relations are complex, especially in relation to the power relations between the researcher and the research participants. Attention needs to be paid to the micropolitics at operation in the design, implementation and write-up of any research effort, especially in relation to issues of domination and subordination (Bhavnani, 1994). These micropolitics however, do not mean that the researched is always more powerful than the researcher, but that the position of the two in relation to class, race, gender, nationality (to name but a few) will have an impact on what information is presented and how this information is analysed. All of this relates closely to the partiality of the researcher in knowledge production.

My main concern in relation to issues of power and representation lies with the question of how *"to speak about people whilst trying not to speak for them"* (Moore, 1994:8) Or rather, how do I speak about the experiences of women football players without speaking for them and thus 'appropriating' their voices?

In essence, I believe that speaking ‘for’ someone I almost completely unavoidable, especially if the research is not undertaken and presented as participatory project; which this project is not. I tried, however, to let the research participants control much of the direction and content of the interviews and I have presented their individual voices through narrative quotations in this thesis. Nonetheless I have had the power to decide which parts of their experiences, and whose voices, get represented and which do not.

Central concerns of representation also relate to issues of difference among women. As such, I hold the epistemological position that gender intersects with other axes of discrimination, and that in order to fully understand gendered experiences, the experiences of the ‘raced’ and ‘classed’ body must also be given full attention. Moreover, a consideration of difference entails a promise of not representing women as powerless victims of male- domination, through presenting agency as deviant. Bhavnani (1994) for example, argues that “... *the analysis cannot be complicit with dominant representations which reinscribe inequality*” (Bhavnani, 1994:29). Much early feminist sports sociology was guilty of exactly this reinscription through their research. Such work often dichotomised the sporting experiences of men and women, and presented women as a homogenous group of victims of male oppression that enjoyed few liberties on the sports arena (Pelak, 2005). However, in the past two decades, feminist writings on sport have reacted to these former representations by emphasising difference, context and women’s agency, as individuals and as groups. In this project, one of my key concerns is to counter this tendency towards victimising women, and I have tried to pay attention the numerous and creative ways in which women football players negotiate and challenge material and ideological constraints on an everyday basis.

Ethical considerations

In addition to what I pointed out in the previous section, this project also entails some practical steps towards ensuring that my endeavour is of an ethical nature

(as far as possible at least). All participants were asked to make informed consent to participation, two of the interviewees signed consent forms, while the rest were explained the aims and purpose of the research project, and I guaranteed, on tape, that their responses will remain confidential and that I will not let anyone else listen to the recorded interview or know what their real names are. As a result, all interviewees have been given pseudonyms, and I have left out certain biographical information to ensure the anonymity of all participants. The promise of anonymity has been an important concern for me, and sections of my analysis have been left out in this final version because I felt that the information provided in those sections would enable readers to discover the identity of some of my participants. Although South African women footballers hardly receive celebrity status, some are public figures and their names and stories are known to the South African public, and because some of the information contained in the interviewees can be viewed as sensitive and controversial I have left the easily identifiable sections out of this thesis.

The interview recordings have not been available for anyone else to listen to, and apart from my supervisor, no one has been allowed to read the interview transcripts.

Lastly, I have attempted to undertake an ethical project by remaining committed to producing knowledge for creating social justice, and through, to the best of my ability, present the words and experiences of my research participants in ways that does not represent them as voiceless victims of an unjust society. Throughout this process, I commit myself to being honest and open about my positionality and power within this project.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This section will outline the outline the research design for this research project by outlining each step of the research process in turn.

Because this research project was, in many ways, a continuation of research interests and projects I have previously undertaken, I did not do a pilot study for this project. However, the two projects I have previously undertaken with women footballers in South Africa have informed my approach to research, and provided me with a good network and knowledge of the research 'field'. However, this project signalled an expansion of previous research projects in that I chose to interview women I was not well acquainted with. Previously, I have chosen to interview fellow players at the University of Cape Town's women's football team, but because I had far more time and resources to undertake this project, I decided to focus my attention on professional women footballers. This provided an interesting set of challenges, I was particularly challenging to interview women and travel to places that I was completely unfamiliar with.

Ever since I first started researching women's football in 2006 I have dreamed of undertaking a research project with the South African women's national team, and while formulating the proposal for this Masters project, I decided that the time had finally come for me to attempt to do exactly this. Although I had previously interviewed and spent time with former national team players, I was not familiar with any of the players, nor members of the administrative staff, and I had to be creative in working to establish formal contact with management of the national team. The remainder of this section will outline my research 'journey', and will try as far as possible, to provide a clear picture of how I went about gathering the information presented in this thesis.

The sampling process

Because I decided early on that I wanted the research participants for this project to be members of the women's national football team. I chose to interview this group of players because I felt that interviewing women who play professional football, I would be able to learn more about an aspect of participation that I was previously unfamiliar with. Because I had, up until starting this thesis, only researched recreational footballers, my understanding of the meaning of football

in women's lives was limited to only a certain group of players. In this project, I wanted to speak with women who really make football their life, and who would be able to allow me to examine questions related to women and professional sports, in the context of development.

With the help of my teammate and fellow researcher Cassie Clark, I managed to get in contact with and set up interviews with two former national team players from Cape Town. Both interviews form part of this thesis, but I also used the interview setting as an opportunity to explain to both that I would like to interview current members national players. They both responded well to this and provided me with phone numbers and references in order to get in contact with Fran Hilton- Smith. I subsequently called Hilton- Smith and after a few phone calls where I explained what I would like to do, she suggested that I come to the High Performance Centre (HPC) in Hatfield, Pretoria during the up-coming national team camp so that I could meet the whole team and be able to do interviews with some of them. Feeling scared, excited and overwhelmed I booked flights and accommodation and I arrived in Pretoria on 29th September 2008.

I met with Fran Hilton- Smith a few hours after arriving at the HPC and after explaining to her (again) what I was aiming to do, and what my project was about, she introduced me to the coaching staff and all the players. A few hours later I was approached by two of the national players- they had been told by Hilton-Smith that they were to come and speak to me during their breaks. The fact that 'speaking' to me had been made to seem compulsory for all the players at the camp scared me, and I felt weary about the ethics of the interviews being compulsory. However, I quickly explained to the players that they did not have to speak to me if they did not want to, but that I would appreciate it if they would let me ask them a few questions. Most of the players agreed to this, and I managed to interview 13 of the players present at the camp. I left Pretoria to return to Cape Town on 1st October.

Coming back to Cape Town I realised, with the help of my supervisor, that although I had managed to interview a large number of national team players, I still needed more interview material. Thus, I decided to contact the coach of one of the oldest and most successful women's football clubs in Cape Town to see if she would allow me to spend some time at their trainings in order to interview some of her players. She agreed to me doing this, and during October and November 2008 I attended training sessions at least once a week. I spent a lot of time watching trainings, speaking informally to the players and the coaching staff; while also telling the whole team that I was doing research and that I would like to interview some of them about their experiences as football players. Over a course of about 6 weeks I conducted interviews with 5 of the players from this team. Unfortunately, 2 of the interview recordings were lost due to a technical malfunction.

My research journey was long, scary but also incredibly rewarding. I was in numerous uncomfortable and unfamiliar situations, but knowing that I had managed to 'get in' with the national team administration made me feel incredibly proud. In fact, the journey proved to me that through my experience as a football player and previous research project I have been able to familiarise myself with a large number of women's football stakeholders, this network was invaluable for the success of this thesis. The 'sampling' method thus, was one of purposive, snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is very common in the qualitative paradigm and involves choosing a sample on the basis of own knowledge of the research population and on the aims of the research project (Babbie and Mouton, 2005:166).

The interviews

The data for this thesis was gathered through in- depth semi structured interviews with 18 elite- level women footballers. Qualitative interviews are generally "*flexible, iterative, and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and carved in stone*" (Babbie and Mouton, 2005:166). I chose to gather data through

in- depth interviews because the aims of my research project required that I assemble thick description and detailed accounts. I believe that through individual interviews I am better able to present each research participant and allow for their voice to be present despite my authorship. Because of the limited amount of time I spent at the HPC, and because the players had very little free time in which to speak with, several of the interviews were performed with two, or more, players at the same time. Because I felt that interviewing two players at the same time created an environment that was less formal and interrogative, I decided to make use of the same method also during my research in Cape Town. When speaking with two players at the same time, less focus was placed on my questioning and the interviews became more like conversations about different experiences, understandings and opinions. They also created situations where the participants would discuss issues between themselves without my controlling the direction and content of these debates. As such, I felt that pairing interviewees sustained a more spontaneous and less threatening environment. Below follows an outline of the structure of each interview;

Pretoria:

- 1 individual interview (1 player)
- 3 paired interviews (6 players)
- 1 focus group interview (6 players)

Cape Town:

- 3 individual interviews (3 players)
- 1 paired interview (2 players)

Total: 9 interviews with 18 players

As I was incredibly nervous before each interview, I arrived at all interviews with a (long) list of possible questions to ask (see Appendix B), but depending on the responses of the interviewees, probing and follow-up questions were also asked. I amended the list of questions after each interview, for example if one

interviewee spoke about issues I had not thought of previously. As such, the interviews covered different topics and different questions were asked in each interview.

Doing interviews with professional footballers was an intimidating experience, especially since up to this point I had only had experience with interviewing my own teammates. Suddenly, I was in a situation where I was no longer ‘an expert’ on being a woman footballer; my experience on the field was far less extensive than theirs. However, when a few of the national team players commented that they recognised me as one of the UCT women’s football team that competed at the 2007 South African Student Sports Union National Tournament in Johannesburg, I felt more comfortable and felt that a new level of familiarity emerged between us. Nonetheless, doing the interviews was a challenging experience, and the interviews in Pretoria ‘felt’ very different from those in Cape Town. This is related to the fact that I spent more time with the Cape Town players, and these interviews were performed in much less formal settings. Also, doing interviews at the HPC during a national team camp constructed a very formal setting in which the interviewees position as national representatives was evident. When I asked whether they are told how to act and what to say when they interviewed as national team players, Winnie, an experienced Banyana player, said to me that;

“Like we are actually told...you know, not to talk about politics, about football politics, we should just be simple... answer questions in a very positive simple way. Ja, and just leave politics alone...”

Because of this, the interviews with the national team players were, at times, much less personal and open than the other interviews, but while some of the Banyana players would only give an almost ‘scripted’ version of their experiences, others would be less guarded and share information more openly.

Because the only South African language I am comfortable (and capable) of speaking is English, all the interviews were performed in English. Few of the players were first- language English speakers, but on the few occasions that we

could not understand each other we mostly managed to rephrased and state our point or question differently. That being said, I still think many things were possibly 'lost in translation', despite the fact that all players were eloquent and articulate in English. I was aware of this concern when I set out to do this research, but I decided that the gains of having an interpreter would not outweigh the importance of establishing a open, informal and confidential interview space. This, I felt, would not have been possible if an interpreter had been present during the interviews. For future purposes, I will however, again consider the question of bringing in an interpreter.

Recording and transcription

All interviews were voice recorded as all interviewees consented to this. Field notes were also made regularly, especially after each interview was concluded.

I transcribed all interview recordings in full personally. Although transcription may seem like a 'straightforward' process, experience has shown me that it is not. Because I am convinced to people hear and re- present the same things very differently, I was committed to doing all the transcription myself. Moreover, I tried to be as detailed as possible in transcribing, making note of all utterances and all body- language. I did not, however, make general notes of intonation, apart from when the participants 'acted a part' or used intonation to make specific points.

Discourse analysis

The interview transcripts from all interviews were analysed through a Foucauldian form of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is "*an interpretive technique, in which subject positions are located and the collective assumptions and shared meanings and values that have been cumulatively built up through the collective experiences of the group are described*" (Mama, 1995:98). However, What remains important to remember about discourses and discourse analysis, is that "to

analyse and identify discourses is equivalent to identifying and analysing systems of statements as bearers of their rules of formation” (Diaz-Bone, Buhrmann, Rodriguez, Schneider, Kendall and Tirado, 2007:3).

The first level of analysis started when I was transcribing the interviews; during transcription I made note of any especially interesting points, and issues that appeared in several of the interviews. After this, I proceeded to read and work with all the transcripts in order to establish an entry-level list of themes and discourses that arose from the interviews. The themes (or codes) used as a basis for discourse analysis were results of my specific research questions, but some also appeared from reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. Some themes became key points of discussion because I had beforehand decided that they were of specific interest and I had geared questions to start discussions on these topics. These themes included ‘getting into football’, ‘tomboyism’, ‘family and friends’ and ‘training and weight concerns’, and were chosen because I felt that through talking about, for example, experiences with weight and training I would be able to examine which discourses were made use of, and how these discourses were understood. In this, the themes mark focal points at which I aimed to focus the discussion in order to hear discourses and contradictions. However, some of the themes also emerged from the interviewees’ responses, and were not themes that I had imagined including. One of these themes was ‘injuries and pain’, while I had thought that it would be important for me to explore the women’s experiences with injuries and pain, it was the importance and complexity of such narratives in the interviewees’ responses that caused this to be a separate theme. Overall however, the themes were chosen as particular points at which clear, contradictory or ambivalent engagements with discourses emerge in the interviewees’ responses, and I use the themes as entry points through which discourses are examined.

I examined all interview transcripts so as to investigate how the statements from each individual participants could be traced to specific and historical discourses, as part of an aim to see how the women who take part in my research challenged

and conceptualised themselves as embodied subjects. The first step in this process was to identify the different discourses that the women draw on. Secondly, I looked at how they positioned themselves within these discourses, and thirdly how they re- conceptualised and challenged these discourses through their own experiences.

University Of Cape Town

CHAPTER 5:

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

3.1 FOOTBALL: A GAME FOR MEN?

“With women’s football the girls know that there is no money, they are playing for pure enjoyment”

Despite major achievements of the South African national teams in 2008 and the establishment of the ABSA and SASOL regional leagues, women’s football remains under-funded, both at local, provincial and national levels. The Banyana Banyana team does not, by far, receive equal remuneration to the Men’s National Team (Bafana Bafana) (Saavedra, 2004). Banyana Banyana players are painfully aware of these inequalities, and while they are clearly frustrated over the lack of sponsorships and remuneration; their core concerns seem to be over the lack of publicity and recognition for women’s football;

“We perform well, we come back with trophies of tournaments and then ag, we don’t get recognised for it. Whereas the guys they show every single game [on tv] and they have been losing, loosing, losing”¹

At club level, material constraints and structural inequalities leave women footballers in even more disadvantaged positions. Pelak (2005) points out the important material constraints that hinder the development of women’s football and the development of the skills of female football players in the Western Cape, such as lack of adequate funding, equipment and transportation. Clubs and teams that compete on the highest level (SASOL league), or that are affiliated to a male club, seem to experience less pressing financial constraints (Clark, Mills and Engh, 2009). However, while they might have access to facilities and they have enough equipment and clothing for all their players, these teams also suffer from a lack of

¹ All italicised quotes are direct quotes from interviews; quotes have not been grammatically altered and are presented in verbatim.

sustainable and long-term sponsorships. Again, coaches and managers support the teams with money from their own already over-stretched budgets.

Getting into football

Most of the women interviewed first started playing football informally, in the street around their homes. They all remember being the only, or one of very few, girls actively playing football. The lack of footballing structures and teams, especially for young girls, means that many only have opportunities to play in this informal way. Players from middle class backgrounds however seem to have opportunities to play for organised and structured teams from a young age. Most of the women I spoke with had been involved in numerous other sports before, or while, playing football. Many had also been athletes or runners. One of the girls I interviewed in Cape Town, Betty², told me that while she had played football informally for several years, she had never even considered the possibility of playing for an organised girls' team and thus put more effort into being an athlete. The following quote shows clearly her surprise at discovering that women also play organised football:

*"One day I met this lady, she told me about girls soccer and I was stunned
"how do you mean girls soccer?" (Laughs) I had never heard about it"*

One of my interviewees, Linda, a 19 year old from Johannesburg, told me that she started playing football for a team when she was only 4 years old. Her best friend, a boy, introduced her to football. Linda's parents were supportive of her playing football, despite the fact that she tended to be the only girl in the team until she reached the age of 15 and was barred from playing in a boy's team. In fact, Linda suggested that her mother was proud of her individuality and difference from other girls:

"I think my mum thought it was cool that I was the only girl playing"

² All interviewee names have been changed, and key biographical details have been excluded in order to ensure the anonymity of all participants.

Linda's involvement in football differs significantly from that of the other players interviewed. Due to her white, middle-class location she was afforded opportunities to play formally, in structured teams and leagues from a very young age. Most of the other players I spoke with started playing football informally between the ages of 6 and 9, but did not play for a team until they were between 12 and 16. The lack of opportunities for formal and organised play means that many girls and women have very short careers in football, or chose not to play at all. As a result, women and girls, in comparison with boys and men, enjoy less regular and qualified coaching and competition, resulting in fewer opportunities for skills development and higher-level competition.

Many girls will not to play football because they have to play with boys. Several of my interviewees spoke of having had friends who, after only having played football for a short while, decided to quit because they did not like having to play with boys. Although most spoke of their male 'team' mates as being supportive and accommodating, they often experienced being ridiculed or treated roughly by boys when playing informally in the street. Reflecting on these experiences, Desiree suggested that the experience of playing with boys makes you stronger;

"Sometimes you know boys like to hurt a girl, they would like hurt you but it makes you stronger everyday"

This statement by Desiree is interesting in several ways; firstly, it clearly shows how, despite being the only girl and despite being hurt by boys, Desiree refused to give in to calls for her to play a more feminine appropriate sport. Her love and enjoyment of football surpassed that of attempts to hinder her participation. Her statement, however, also shows clearly the extent to which abuse, harassment and violence has become naturalised as part of her football-life. For a girl who plays football, violence and abuse on the field are common, and may form part of processes to control and limit female participation. Violence, or threats of violence, effectively function to remind girls and women that they are entering a 'male' space, a space they must ask for permission to enter. For boys, being 'outplayed' by a girl incredibly humiliating and if this were to happen, the girls would often experience retaliatory violence through rough tackles or outright

kicking. Through this, the girls were constantly reminded that although they were welcome to play football, the sport still remained a male sport and they were, as girls, not supposed to outplay or perform better than their male counterparts. Janine spoke of this, and explained to me that whenever she passed or outplayed a boy, his teammates and friends would start making loud remarks and ridicule his skills by saying *“oh, that girl is beating you!”*

Because this informal street-based form of football often takes place in townships and working-class areas (mostly Black and Coloured areas) many girls are barred (often by female family members) from ‘running with the boys in the street’. While some got punished for partaking in something deemed unsuitable for girls, others would receive less overt ‘reminders’ of what their priorities and activities should concern. Mbali, one of the Banyana players I interviewed, noted this while reflecting on how her family responded to her involvement in football at a young age;

“my mum wasn’t quite chuffed about it... because every time that she saw me on the pitch she would like eventually call me for some certain or some kind of chore that I had to do”

Mbali clearly recognised how her mothers attempts to distract her from football was also an attempt to indirectly ‘remind’ her of what kind of activities a girl should be involved in. Janine, a former Banyana Banyana player from Cape Town, experienced similar pressures from her family, and as a result she started playing football in secrecy. She would run to the field while no one was watching her, and she would make sure to bath and change clothes before anyone in her family could realise what she had been doing.

Mothers, aunts and grandmothers seem to be among the most important adult support figures for most of the players I spoke with; this is partly so due to the fact that very few of the women grew up around fathers or other adult male family members. While mothers were often the most important supporters, they were also the ones who were most instrumental in punishing participation in ‘street’ football. It seems that support for a daughter’s involvement in football

increased as a talent for the game became obvious. Winnie, a Banyana Banyana player, indicates this clearly in the below quote;

“I continued with my football you know I continued to play, and playing and playing until they actually saw that I had a talent you know. It was kind like my potential. So ja they saw and started also getting interested in what I was doing, so ja, eventually they supported me.”

However, many of the girls experienced opposition to football from their mothers and other family members. This opposition however, does not seem to have been rooted in oppositions to sport per-se, it was directed specifically at football as a male sport. Most interviewees, in fact, noted that their families were always supportive of them taking part in sport, so long as the sport was considered a girls' sport. Nandipha's mother for example, tried to get her to stop playing football and rather focus on something more appropriate, like athletics;

“And then she [mother] wants to say “no don't play soccer you better go be an athlete”

Sport was, by many mothers, aunts and grandmothers considered a positive activity that supported good health and aided in keeping girls away from the substance abuse, violence and crime that shaped their communities. Karabo, for example, was very clear when explaining how sport can function to support more positive lifestyles:

“especially townships you know most of the girls, majority of them they are HIV positive they have... 2 kids... 3 kids... and eh, they just like drugs... lately. Alcoholic...”

In this, sport (sometimes also football) came to be understood as an avenue for improvement and upward mobility. Due to poor schooling, many families supported their girls' playing football because they believed that it could ensure better futures through access to tertiary education and jobs within professional sports. This seems to be especially true for those players who get opportunities to play for the national team or for those recruited to live and play at the High

Performance Centre in Pretoria, the only fully- functioning football academy for girls in South Africa.

“for us to play soccer it gives us something to do we...we like further ourselves. We have all got bursaries at universities” (Linda)

‘Tomboys’ and football

Interestingly, near all the women I interviewed were quick to mention that they had many brothers and/or few female friends while growing up when explaining to me how and why they came to play football. They seemed to attempt to explain their love for football through positioning themselves as being different from ‘other’ girls in their area, or through suggesting that since they were the only girl in the family they, in a sense, had ‘no choice’ but to play football with their brothers. In this, they also position themselves as tomboys, as ‘untypical’ girls who were not really interested in ‘girly’ things and who had few female friends. Desiree, a 21 year old from Cape Town, seemed to think it was almost impossible for her not to play football, due to the structure of her family;

“I never, I never like had a sister, or I want to have a sister and stuff like that, so I am just growing up with boys”

Desiree was never close with her mother, and while growing up spent a lot of time with her brothers, they were often responsible for looking after her when her mother was away. As a result she spent a lot of time at the football fields, and eventually started playing with her brothers.

Many of the participants, when reflecting on their introduction to football, explained their fascination with the game by naming themselves as ‘tomboys’ while growing up. This signals a refusal to conform to hegemonic notions of femininity, and illustrates a level of fluidity when it comes to childhood gender identity. Linda, for example, clearly situated herself as being ‘tomboyish’ while growing up, as can be seen in this quote;

“When I was little, I had short hair and stuff, spiky hair, everybody thought I was a boy anyway”

While being a ‘tomboy’ may have permitted women footballers some childhood freedoms from gender- role expectations, tomboyism is a permissible identity for only a limited amount of time only. A refusal to ‘grow out of’ tomboyism through taking on more feminine appropriate activities is immediately considered a signal of transgressing heterosexual norms, and is considered as an indication of homosexuality. In previous research projects, I found that once girls reach puberty, parental appeals to start playing a more appropriate sport, like netball or hockey, become more vocal and pronounced (Haugaa Engh, 2007). It is in connection with expectations of ‘growing out’ of the tomboy phase that questions concerning sexuality and sexual orientation emerge. If tomboyism is not abandoned; for example through engagement in more feminine- appropriate sports or by becoming more ‘domestic’, young football playing women are challenging the limits of acceptability. While childhood allows some boundary crossing in relation to gender roles and stereotypes, adolescence is expected to mark the ascendance into appropriate femininity and, as mentioned, is expected to be followed by ‘giving up’ on football and other kinds of ‘boyish’ behaviour.

Football as a male preserve

In South Africa, as in most parts of the world, football is considered a male sport. This belief has had a severe impact on the experiences of women footballers. While growing up, all of my interviewees experienced exclusion from participating in football, and ridicule for continued participation. They all articulated a clear sense of having had to ‘close their ears’ and not listen to the ridicule from other people while growing up. Many were referred to as boys, or as someone trying to be a boy. This was especially the case for Desiree:

“they like telling me, names, insulting me and swearing me, “you just want to be like a boy” and you know it was for me so sad, I was like crying and like my mum don’t know”

Desiree’s mother was not supportive of her football career, and as a result, Desiree felt like she had no one to talk to about the ridicule and abuse she

experienced. She told me that she used to spend a lot of time home alone crying, and she even tried to make herself stop playing football. However, her brothers continued to support her and take her along to matches and training sessions, and she eventually decided that she needed to learn to stop listening to what other people were saying and focus on what she wanted to do.

For other players, the belief that football is not for women also went so far as to become internalised. Babalwa, a 17-year-old national team player from the Eastern Cape was especially clear on this point:

“Hayi, I told myself that uguthi, that this is for boys, they kick each other, no I can’t play. And then I go back home”

Despite this belief, Babalwa continued to play football and she eventually convinced herself to continue playing football;

“Then I realized uguthi, each and every sport a woman can play. Even if it is not for women”

Interestingly, Babalwa’s statement above shows that although she believes that women can play football, football is essentially a male sport; although women are capable, the sport was meant for men. This idea was evident also among some of the other respondents, although they object to women’s exclusion from football; they still represent male football as the the default state of the game. In negotiating these beliefs to explain and understand their own participation they seem to suggest that although football was originally a sport for men, that does not mean that women nowadays cannot take part. Similarly to Babalwa, Karabo also suggested that football is a male sport, but that there is some space for female participation;

“I am a woman and I am playing a man’s sport and I am gonna score”

The above quote reinforces football as a male sport but shows the complexity of women’s engagement with the sport. Despite the gendering of football, women can still play the game, but the male game is still seen as the standard against which women’s performances are measured. In this, both Babalwa and Karabo are putting themselves in a difficult and contradictory space. They argue for women’s right to play, and for women’s capabilities in the game, but at the same

time they are accepting the ideological limitations on the extent to which they are 'real' footballers. Nonetheless, for both Babalwa and Karabo, there is nothing impossible about women playing football, and being successful at it. This shows the fluidity of the gendering of sport, and clearly highlights the complex ways in which women footballers engage with hegemonic discourses in order to understand, and sometimes justify, their own locations. While not completely discarding dominant discourses, they are in fact reinforcing the gendering of football, but justifying their own participation through drawing on liberalist notions equality- a discourse that does not demand a reconstruction of the game as being for both men and women, but that accepts the masculine domination as something that cannot function to exclude women. This shows the complex and at times contradictory space in which women footballers live and play; in a sense, women footballers become 'comfortable' negotiating such contradictions.

Beliefs about the 'foreignness' and limited capacity of the female body in the football world are part of much wider discourses concerning gendered bodies. From a young age women footballers are aware that 'playing with boys' is seen as being somewhat dangerous; and once they reach puberty, many girls are barred from continuing to play in a boy's team. Teboho, for example, experienced this when she was 17:

"When I was 17 they had to take me out of the team, and put me in a girls team, they said that it was not safe"

This is a common practice all over the world, in England and Norway; for example, football regulations stipulate that at the age of 13 and 15, respectively, women footballers are no longer allowed to play in men's teams. These regulations are supported by, and upholds, the belief that males, as they reach puberty, 'outgrow' females in terms of muscular power and strength, resulting in a situation where the female body is believe to be too weak to effectively and safely compete and play with males. Although this is in many situations functions as a positive safeguard; it nonetheless perpetuates the notions that man are, and always will be, physically more powerful than women, and as a result, women

must be protected against 'unfair' competition. This, in a way, presents a new interpretation and understanding of the 'frailty myth'.

Many of the women I interviewed also took part in the reinforcement of football as a male game through suggesting that men's and women's football are two completely different games. Linda was especially vocal on this point:

"I think that women's soccer and men's soccer are two totally different sports, they should actually... disassociate us totally. Because it is... we have different... we will play to our strengths, which is clearly not speed and whereas men would. So we play a different strategy to what men would"

Quotes like this reinforce the distinctions between men's and women's athletic ability, and thus also perpetuate beliefs about natural physical sex differences. When speaking about the differences between men's and women's football, the women I interviewed tended to refer to 'style' as the main distinction between the two. Although simultaneously acknowledging that football is a male game they argued that the distinction between the two games should be made in reference to style- not skill. Interestingly however, most players seemed to be comfortable with making a clear distinction between the men's and the women's game.

Making this distinction between men's and women's football seems to reproduce a situation in which the male sporting body is more capable and proficient in football than the female body. This belief is supported through a gendering of comments on skills. Many of the women I spoke with have been told, on at least one occasion, that they 'play like a boy'. While this, for the individual woman is a compliment, it nonetheless reinforces notions of male superiority within football. My participants also supported this, as seen in the following statement made by Linda:

"the level I went to when I played for a girls team was quite low, but the obviously when I came here it was more like playing with boys"

At the same time, the above statement hints at the fluidity of the gendering of football; while it seems to be a 'fact' that boys are better footballers than girls, it

remains clear that girls who are talented and receive proper coaching and mentoring are capable of 'playing like boys'. As such, gender is not necessarily an indication of how good one can get at football, but rather a way of signalling skill and proficiency.

Football is not a field women cannot enter, but to prove their legitimacy and authority on the football field, girls have to be 'like boys'. It thus seems that even in the case of women footballers, football continues to be understood as fundamentally being a male activity. This notion is reproduced by women footballers themselves, but it does not function to exclude or de-motivate women from playing football. Personally, I continue to wonder whether the reproduction of these beliefs will effectively make it impossible for women to experience real equality and equity as footballers, or whether their participation will continue to be seen as a temporary 'invasion' a male spaces. These questions and debates are absolutely central to my concerns with using football as a 'tool' for driving gender equality; and form an essential part of feminist analyses of sport. In the next chapter I will provide a more thorough examination of these issues through reading my interviewees' responses in relation to feminist theories.

3.2 THE FEMALE FOOTBALL BODY

Football, as a global phenomenon, is constructed in masculine terms (Lenskyj, 1990), not only is the game, and its leadership dominated by men; male footballers make more money, have access to better resources and enjoy more recognition than their women in the same roles. Even the characteristics and qualities that go into defining 'a footballer' are viewed in masculine terms. As such, women footballers are not, in any way, considered feminine role- models. Their appearances, behaviours and sexualities are under close scrutiny and there are huge expectations on them to perform and embody heterosexual femininity in intimate and complex ways. Women footballers themselves are both perpetuating and challenging these narrow discourses; and they all have intimate relationships with what it means to be a woman who plays football.

I would dare to say that near all women footballers (at least in the contexts I am familiar with), at some point or other, have experienced being labelled as ‘unfeminine’, ‘too masculine’ or ‘butch’. In sporting realms, femininity is often read through the appearance of a female body; because women athletes tend to be more muscular than hegemonic femininity allows, their femininity is often read, or displayed, through their body shape, choice of clothing and hairstyle. As such, women athletes and the value of the sports they engage in are thus often judged according to physical appearance. This, according to the footballers I interviewed is inappropriate and nonsensical:

“They can't judge a sport by the way people look. To me it doesn't make sense” (Linda)

However, the fact remains that sporting bodies are gendered, and the gendering of bodies, not only in sporting realms, is read through performances. Put differently, women footballers’ bodies are expected to simultaneously appear feminine and athletic; in this women are expected to perform femininity, for example through ways of dressing, keeping their hair, movement and their speech. As such, female (and male) athletes are always judged by the way they look. This section will provide a brief analysis of interviewee’s relationships with discourses of femininity, through showing how they both reproduce and challenge hegemonic ideologies through performances and speech. What is evident in this section is a complex web of ideologies and contradictions; and I attempt to shed some light on the ways in which the women I interviewed negotiate these contradictions to construct a ‘feminine athletic’.

The importance of hair and clothing

Hair is a prime marker of heterosexuality; and women are often deemed lesbian if they chose to keep their hair short, or if they neglect to style their hair in ways that are considered feminine. For White women ‘feminine hair’ is mostly seen in relation to length of the hair, whereas for Black and Coloured women ‘good’ or ‘feminine’ hair entails more than simply letting their hair grow. Because of the

racial constructions of Black hair, having ‘good’ (read: feminine) hair demands not only the hair being long, but it also needs to be shaped in specific ways, and made to feel soft and flowy. However, the prominence given to hair as a heterosexual marker is challenged by many footballers. Tumi, a national team player clearly states her position on the topic in the following statement:

“Being a girl doesn’t mean you have to have long hair”

Despite the above opinion being shared by many of the other respondents, it nonetheless remains clear that hair is insignificant only if the remainder of the physical appearance is acceptable in feminine terms. In essence; while some women can get ‘away’ with sporting short hair, others will experience judgement if their hair is not long, soft or ‘feminine’ enough.

However, the performance of ‘feminine hair’ does not only concern ‘short hair’ or ‘long hair’; feminine performances also need to be understood and analysed in racial terms. Although none of my respondents spoke directly about the importance of race in relation to hair and heterosexually attractive femininity, the fact remains that feminine beauty ideals are commonly based on representations of white, blond and long-haired women- an identity that very few of South Africa’s women footballers occupy. In these racialised notions of feminine beauty, ‘black’ hair is unsuitable and not feminine enough. Though it was not mentioned by any of the participants, it is clear that presenting long hair, for Black women, also entails a process of softening and straightening, braiding or dreading their hair. Because I have no statements from the interviewees in relation to this, I will provide a more elaborate consideration of this issue in the Discussion chapter of this thesis, where I will argue that the female sporting body needs to be understood also as a raced body, and that discourses of femininity are also discourses of race.

There is huge pressure to appear feminine within women’s football, especially for the national team players. Due to a lack of popular support, media coverage and successful sponsorships Banyana Banyana players have previously been criticised for being too masculine in appearance and behaviour (Saavedra, 2005:124).

National-level administrators in South Africa have demanded that the Banyana Banyana players attend etiquette classes and wear tighter-fitting shirts (Saavedra, 2005:124). And Ria Ledwaba, then Chairperson of the Women's Committee of SAFA has been quoted as saying *"We don't want our girls to look, act and dress like men just because they play soccer"* (City Press, 12th March 2005). It seems that when sponsorships are not secured, national team players are blamed for not being proper role-models and representatives. Janine, a former national team player, clearly remembered these demands from administrators:

"we were like "why do we have to dress on a football field" like wear tight clothes? ... the one thing they actually said is we have to we have to let our hair grow"

According to Janine, the team was actually given new, and more feminine, clothing and training kit to support the renewed effort to secure a sponsorship; but the clothes were quickly returned when the players threatened to strike if they were not given their 'old' clothing back. The refusal to wear a feminine kit, intended to appeal to men through emphasising the erotic appeal of women's bodies, also signals a refusal to present permit a further sexualisation of their bodies. It is common to attempt to increase the appeal of women's sports through designing, and enforcing the use of, kits and clothing designed to attract the gaze of heterosexual men.

Due to popular stereotypes, many women footballers are also eager to present themselves as feminine, and as heterosexual; while they may have shown resistance to previous efforts to feminise them through clothing, they nonetheless object to the fact that most football gear and clothing is constructed for men. So, while many of the women I interviewed clearly objected to attempts by administrators to 'feminise' them through making their kits and clothing more tight-fitting and sexy, they almost seemed to contradict themselves when saying that they really want clothes that fit women properly. Linda, for example, had the following to say when I asked whether they were happy with the new kits they were given;

“The shorts are covering my knees, they are like $\frac{3}{4}$ pants, and the shirts. We are using men’s stuff. The tracksuit pants the crotch is like down by my knees”

Playing football with shorts and shirts that are far too big can easily become a problem, and I have myself experienced the pain of playing with shorts that are designed for a male figure. Like Teboho said: *“men’s shorts are tight around the waist”*. Thus, the contradiction I mentioned above seems to be connected both to issues of what is comfortable- too tight or too big, is not comfortable- as well as to objections to a sexualisation and eroticisation of their bodies. While some of the national team players seemed to contradict themselves, like Linda, others seemed more bothered about having to play in tight- fitting kits than about having to play in ‘men’s kits’. Karabo, for example said that;

“I just don’t understand why everybody wants to change our kits you know, to make them tighter...for me if I have to wear something that is going to hold me [be tight-fitting] I just don’t like”.

Karabo, as opposed to Linda, did not want to play in more feminine or tight-fitting kits, and she suggested that a kit has no impact on her performance on the field. Although there is heavy pressure on women footballers to appear more feminine and sexy, the players do not respond to these pressures the same way. While some would like to wear more feminine kits, to show their ‘feminine shape’ more clearly, others object to this feminising process and do not want to wear clothing that emphasises erotic appeal.

The regulation of hair and clothing emerges from various vantage points, and women footballers can be as judgemental of each other as outsiders are of them. Discourses of what is proper feminine attire in public is intimately tied to notions of respectability, and several interviewees argued that it is disrespectful to wear clothing ‘like men do’. This was a point reiterated in many of the interviews, and Janine’s statement quoted below is a good example of some of these attitudes;

“Some girls really look like guys, they come there, if they come to camp they have like men’s trousers, men’s shoes that is what they like to wear... they don’t look like girls really”

While it was a shared opinion among all participants that women footballers do not tend to wear short skirts and high heels very often; they nonetheless judge each other if someone appears in 'inappropriate' (read" masculine) clothing. The women do not expect their teammates and colleagues to be ultra- feminine, but they still believe that women should dress and behave 'like women' when in public. They also suggested that women footballers in general tend to live up to these expectations; but those who refuse to do so, are quickly labelled as disrespectful, manly and inappropriate. Thus signalling that while they accept women 'acting like men' while playing football, in performances on and off the field should women should nonetheless act and be feminine. This presents an interesting contradiction; while 'playing like a boy' is a good thing, something to strive towards, 'dressing like a boy' is bad, and those who do so are quickly judged and posited as 'other' and 'different'. This complexity of gendered performances do not only affect clothing and hair, but also go so far as to impact on body shapes and sizes as well as training and dietary regimes, as the following sections will show.

Football, femininity and muscle

The relationship between muscles and femininity is complex. Increased female sports participation and increased media and popular recognition of this participation has definitely contributed to the recent (limited) incorporation of athleticism and muscle- tone in the feminine beauty ideal. Images of athletic and muscular women have become more visible and acceptable, but it is muscle tone, and not size, that is considered attractive and sexy (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003). In fact, many of the respondents argued that through playing football they are in fact achieving beautiful and sexy bodies. This is evidenced in the following statement made by Winnie:

"Once you actually take part in a part in a particular sporting code... your body is going become beautiful"

This reinforces the demands posed by recent beauty ideals that situate an athletic and fit femininity as attractive (read: Fit=beautiful). In this sense, some of the

women suggested that they are in a win-win situation: while they are training to become fit for their sport, they also shape their bodies to become sexy. The need to be seen as being feminine, physically, was a key concern for several of the participants. Thandeka, for example, said that:

“I want that people can see, yes, she is a lady. You know that nice body “

A ‘nice’ body, according to Thandeka’s peers includes having defined legs, a flat stomach (preferably with a six-pack), not too much muscle, but no extra fat. It is also important that the feminine shape of the body is evident, in other words, breasts and buttocks must be clearly noticeable.

There is a fine line however, between having a fit, beautiful feminine body and becoming too big and muscular. Some respondents laughed heartily when reflecting over how football and training de-feminises your body, they claimed that due to a strict training regiment their thighs become so muscular that it is no longer possible for them to ‘walk like women’ or wear stilettos. Karabo, for example, said that;

“Even if I wear stilettos now, you will see that I struggle”

It is clear that hard and regular physical exercise poses a real danger to the feminine body; as a result, many of the respondents explained to me that they keep this in mind when training. Weight- lifting, in particular, can pose a real problem for maintaining a feminine physique. Winnie explained to me that although she receives a weight- lifting programme from her coach, she avoids doing certain kinds of exercises and is careful with how much weight she lifts in order to avoid building too much muscle;

“We actually try to make sure you know that we maintain our normal muscles, we don’t want to like...become big just like boys you know, too much muscle “

Winnie’s statement clearly indicates that although some muscle tone is acceptable for women, muscle bulk is fundamentally associated with masculinity, and that it is important for female athletes to present bodies that are distinctly different (and smaller) than male athletic bodies. Mbali presented me with a similar argument, and said that because she tends to ‘bulk up’ easily, she is

particularly careful when it comes to weight- lifting, and tends to focus on doing cardiovascular training instead.

The ‘naturalness’ of muscles is complex; while women naturally have less muscle than men, it is also possible for women to ‘overdo’ the physical training and become too big. In the words of Babalwa:

“But you know some of the girls they do weights. They overdo things; they want to be fitter than boys. And that is impossible”

Babalwa here touches on a very important issue; while some women overdo the weight training they will never be able to appear as fit and muscular as a male athlete can- due to the limitations of the female body. This reinforces the idea of there being a natural physical difference between the sexes, a belief that is fundamentally supports heteronormative discourses. Although women footballers may have an increased awareness of the fluidity and constructedness of such beliefs, they nonetheless continue to judge themselves and others according to the same standards.

For those women who are seen to ‘overdo’ the physical training, the sentiments expressed by Babalwa and Winnie pose a bit of a problem. They are aware that they are pushing the limits of acceptability and they their bodies and training regiments are under close scrutiny by other players. Some, like Mbali, respond to this by suggesting that it is inevitable for them to become muscular;

“When you do some kind of certain sport if you are a woman you are bound to adopt like a male structure... obviously a woman has got certain type of a body and the guys have a certain type of body, but when you do weights that hard intense training, your body is bound to change” (Mbali)

While others apologise for their muscular physique while at the same time refusing to limit the amount of time spent in the gym. Nandipha provides an excellent example of this conundrum in the following quote:

“Na, unfortunately I am in love with it... I love it, I never think about it [becoming too big] cause I love it”

In this statement Nandipha clearly recognises that her love for lifting weights is something that she should be apologising for, but she refuses to do so nonetheless. Although she is aware that others see her as too big/masculine, she refuses to let this impact on her training regiment, and she maintains her right to train as much as she wants. In this, she also poses a clear challenge to the notion that only men can train as much as they want- women should be careful in the gym.

The above considerations of the feminine athletic has attempted to show how women footballers negotiate and create meaning out of a complex set of contradictory discourses and ideas. And while it seems to be an almost impossible identity, the women I interviewed showed that despite the contradictions, it might be possible to be, simultaneously, a woman and a footballer. This identity however, is not only transgressive, contradictory and sometimes dangerous, it is an identity that exists within a constant struggle for legitimacy and visibility. In South Africa, the female athlete is not afforded much recognition and legitimacy, and as a result, images of a feminine athletic are not widespread. In fact, the processes and negotiations outlined above may in fact form part of an increasing commodification and westernisation of South African beauty ideals. What the above section fails to make note of is the fact that the western, athletic and slender ideal is relatively new to South Africa, and is more widespread and acceptable within middle- class environments. None of my interviewees made reference to so-called traditional African beauty ideals, which prescribe fuller figures and rounder shapes for women, despite that few of them can be considered of middle- class backgrounds. A complex web of femininity discourses exist in South Africa, providing South African women with a variety of choices and opportunities in grafting their own spaces and subjectivities. What seems to be missing (or only slowly developing) however is a discourse that legitimises Black women's athleticism. Current ideas only make space for these within a narrowly defined, and racialised, image of the White, blonde, heterosexy athlete. A debate about the implications of this will follow in the discussion chapter; but references will also be made this in the next section.

3.3 BODILY SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL

This section will provide some insights into the experiences of women footballers in South Africa that directly speak to their locations as professional footballers. This section will provide an analysis of physical embodiment outside of heteronormative discourses. Although the distinction between this section and section 3.2 'The Female Football Body', may seem arbitrary, I have chosen to separate the two discussions so as to be able to provide a separate argument concerning physical embodiment and professional sports. In this section, I present a critique of the common idea that sport and physical activity inevitably leads women to have a more positive body image, a healthier body and increased physical confidence. I also provide examples of how the sporting body is constructed and understood as a gendered body, and the impact this has on women's elite sports participation. This point will be further debated in the discussion, where I claim that heteronormative discourses have an absolutely fundamental impact on almost all aspect of sporting women's lives in South Africa.

Weighing in

While sport participation may allow women (and men) a sense of physical-embodiment and power, an experience that has not previously been open to women, there are also growing concerns over the impact of elite/professional sport activity on physical embodiment. Although women's football in South Africa has not yet reached the stage of being fully a professional sport (there is no national league, and women footballers still cannot make a living from their sport) players at the top level nonetheless experience intense pressures to train daily and watch their weight in order to achieve an acceptable athletic body. Many players clearly indicated that their coaches and management kept a close watch on their weight, and that they were punished if they were seen to carry too much weight.

The following quote from Linda provides a useful insight into weight- related concerns:

“Coach told me “you are FAT!” and I was like ‘hmm... maybe I am...’ and then he just put me under pressure to lose it...you think cause you are training so much you can eat whatever you want, but it doesn’t work that way...”

For several reasons, I find the above quote illuminating; it clearly shows the external regulation and control that footballers experience in relation to their weight. As a professional footballer, your weight is under close scrutiny and surveillance; and although your body is ‘your own’, you are not in a position to determine, on your own, what size and shape is acceptable. Linda’s surprise at her coach calling her fat illuminates the disempowerment associated with external weight control. In addition, it seems that due to being called fat, Linda has started paying more attention to her own weight and calorie intake.

Most of the interviewees stated that they themselves, or their coaches, keep regular checks on their weight and body shape, for some this means stepping onto a scale every two or three weeks. For those who play for well- resourced teams or reside at the High Performance Centre (HPC) in Pretoria, maintaining an acceptable weight and following a healthy diet is less problematic than for those who play for under- resourced teams or that are unemployed. While living at the HPC players have access to regular, healthy meals as well as a fully equipped gym and a heated pool. Because their diet and training regiments are determined by coaches and HPC dieticians, professional trainers and physiotherapists they enjoy regular access to professional assistance and support; and as such, they experience fewer weight and dietary concerns. For others however, diet and training regiments are individually determined and regulated; as a result, these players often experience distress and criticism when arriving at national team camps in Pretoria. Huge pressure is put on them to self- regulate to ensure that they stay fit and do not put on weight or muscle strength in the off- season. As such, players located in teams that are not well- resourced and structured have to do ball, cardiovascular and weight training, if possible, on their own throughout

the year, while also making sure that they do not put on or loose too much weight while not in national team camp.

Many of the participants told me stories of occasions in which they came back to their teams, to HPC or national team camp after a holiday to find that they had become fat. I find the liberal use of 'fat' quite disturbing, especially when considering that most of them train a minimum of 5 days a week. Thandeka, a resident at HPC, stated that:

"Sometimes when we come back from home we are FAT"

Fatness, it seems, is not so much measured against health concerns and medical recommendations, as it is measured against whatever standard a specific coach has set for his/her players, depending on what his/her understanding of fitness is. Moreover, the players structurally regulate their own weight and even the slightest weight- gain is considered as having become 'fat'. This fatness is in turn interpreted as evidence of a player being lazy to train regularly.

'The body'

Weight and body shape concerns are not, however, limited to dieting and training in order to lose weight. Some players perceive their bodies as being too small or thin for athletic concerns, but acceptable for feminine expectations. The complex nature of these concerns is highlighted in this statement made by Pumla;

"They always tease me that "no no you must eat more, cause you can't you don't have muscle". I say "no no no I am fit naturally, so you can't see my fitness"... because I don't have fat, I am always skinny. They say "ah, you are lucky"

Pumla has faced clear criticisms for her lack of 'bulk' and her teammates often remind her that she is 'small', simultaneously however, her teammates seem to consider her lucky for not 'having fat'- clearly showing that weight concerns for elite-level athletes are not only constrained to athletic ability but also to attractiveness and femininity.

Football bodies have a specific shape and form. Apart from women footballers bodies having to be feminine- they also have to be football bodies. This entails being muscularly powerful yet slender; a football body needs to be strong enough to be able to push another body off the ball, while also speedy enough to change pace and direction with relative ease. Upper thigh strength is particularly important. Some of the girls interviewed expressed this clearly through pointing to concerns that they are too small or too skinny. This is especially important in relation to a players position on the field. A defender is required to have a very different body from winger (far left/right midfield). Bronwyn makes this very clear in the following quote:

“You can't be a defender and not, not have...the muscle, just to push the player man...you have to be strong”

As a result of ideas concerning body- type requirements and positions on the field, some players have experienced being played in a completely different position from what they are used to because their coach believes that their physique will be more suitable for a different position. Pumla, when she changed teams a few years ago, experienced this when her coach said she was too small and thin to play as a defender;

“The coach he say “no no no you cant be a defender, [you must play] middlefield or striker” and then I start playing middlefield”

The points above go far in illustrating not only the centrality of, but also the numerous ways in which a footballers body is read and interpreted by others. While some players struggle to gain weight, in specific places, in order to be allowed to play in their favourite position, others are training hard to avoid becoming too big for their position. While a player's skill and interest in a specific position may be a concern to some coaches, others argue that it is easier for a player to learn new skills than to change body type. In essence, the way in which a body is read by a coach holds repercussions for how and when a player will play.

Training regiments

The amount and type of training a player is required to do, depends on the philosophies of the individual coach, as well as the type of team a one plays for. For the young women who are a part of the Football Academy at the HPC, training regiments are strictly regulated and all players train together. This means that the academy players have few opportunities to control their own training system, and all sessions are planned well in advance. As a result girls as young as 16 are already accustomed to a routine in which they train twice a day (3-5 hours in total), 5 days a week. When I asked how she felt about training this much Thandeka said that she has started getting used to it now, but when she first arrived at the academy she would be so tired every night that she felt like crying.

Apart from those who live at the academy, most of the players train between 2 and 6 times a week, depending on whether they are in season or not. The Cape Town based players seem to be training less than those who live and play in Johannesburg and Durban, probably because of a lack of sponsorships and adequate training facilities in their club. As a result, they are under huge pressure to train individually, throughout the year. This however, requires a vast amount of self- discipline and most of these players agree that it is very difficult to stay in shape during off- season. Their club does not provide gym memberships and because these are expensive, none of the players can afford individual memberships. These women have to overcome bigger obstacles than other players, and their training regiments are far less varied and creative than those in more resourceful clubs and locations.

Regardless of personal training regiments and schedules, all the women I interviewed indicated that proper and regular training is one of the core concerns for a woman footballer. There is not such thing as a holiday from training, or holiday, in the off-season, or if they are not in national camp or at HPC they have to stay fit alone. In order to be successful, one has to dedicate enough time and

effort to appropriate and hard training. Many women spoke of being ‘addicted’ to training, and explained that they have to train regularly in order to stay ‘sane’;

“I can’t like not train for a whole week. Because I stress a lot I stress. I stress if I don’t train” (Mbali)

All the respondents spoke of regular training as being one of the most important aspects of being successful as an elite- level footballer, and many also argued that they do not train as much or as hard as they ideally should. This issue is a special interest to me; I would argue that the emancipatory and empowering potentials of sport participation for women can easily become overshadowed by over-training and under- eating. In essence, I am concerned that elite- level participation does not necessarily afford women with opportunities for positive physical embodiment, but that it rather enforces a new level of bodily control, management and distress that is specific to professional sports. This is particularly notable in the respondents’ use of modals when referring to training regimens and daily routines. Pumla said to me that *“I must keep myself fit”* and Tamara argued that *“I have to be serious now, focus on football and be disciplined”*; both indicating the level of self- discipline and internalising of demands that comes with being a professional athlete. While they all seem to thoroughly enjoy training, at least football training, training nonetheless becomes naturalised as something they have to do, not as something they do because they want to. In this, training and sports participation forms part of a regulated regime, constructed through discourses of fitness, fatness and athleticism, and players are constantly putting themselves under pressure to live up to these standards and expectations.

Injuries and pain

For all professional footballers, injuries remain a core concern; and I have yet to meet a footballer that does not have a long, complicated and recurring history of injuries to share. The women I interviewed for my thesis were no exception from this rule. Injuries add to the burden of policing your weight in accordance with

feminine and athletic ideals and injuries can lead to weight issues and bad eating patterns especially for those who are not a part of resourceful structures.

Of all the participants, Janine presented the longest and most complicated injury-narrative, starting with a broken ankle at the age of 9 and culminating in a complicated knee injury that led to her retirement from international football at the age of 27. Thinking back on how her many injuries impacted on her psyche, she stated;

“ I had an operation and after that I had crutches and it took me over a year to get back again, and I picked up this weight and I struggled a lot, I didn’t know what to do. Sometimes I don’t even want to eat, I eat like fruits and nothing else, I drink coffee and I have my cigarettes”

For Janine, an injury did not only mean that she lost her spot in the national team as well as her club team, she also had to fight long and hard to have her medical bills covered by SAFA. Although she sustained the injured while representing her country, she had to postpone the required surgery several times because she did not have funds available to cover the costs associated. In addition, her injuries left her feeling depressed and caused her to gain a lot of weight due to not being able to train regularly anymore. Janine’s story provides but one example of how a single injury can end a football career.

The fear of sustaining serious and debilitating injuries paradoxically leads many women footballers to ignore various aches and pains they may feel while playing. Nandipha, for example, confessed that she is ignoring an injury because she is afraid that paying attention to it will either end her career or leave her facing several months of recovery;

“I am running away from injuries...I don’t want operation. My injuries are pushing me to do operations ...I can’t not now...now it is quiet, but it will come one day”

Although she is aware that ignoring an injury may lead it to become worse, she keeps playing despite often feeling pain and discomfort. Dealing with pain becomes an integral part of coping mechanisms when participating in elite- level

football. Mbali stated clearly in our conversation that she is accustomed to dealing with pain;

“It is all in the mind...the power of the mind is very powerful”

Mbali thus clearly suggests that it is possible to ignore an injury through refusing to acknowledge it. This represents a mechanical view of the physical body, a view that in no way enhances physical confidence and empowerment. Rather than listening to her body and reading the signs that it is sending, she continues to push her body beyond the pain threshold in order to fulfill the short-term goal of playing another game for the national team. The pressures of elite and professional sports create a situation whereby ‘coping’ with pain and injury is an integral part of participation, as it is seen as inevitable to achieving success (Theberge, 2008). Through disciplining the body in line with discourses of elite sport and athleticism, many athletes come to treat, and perhaps experience, their bodies as machines for success (Zakus, 1995). ‘Dealing’ with pain and injuries, however, is also a gendered experience. Women footballers are under constant scrutiny, and judgement is easily passed if they appear ‘to act like a girl’ for example when sustaining an injury. Statements like ‘crying like a girl’ and ‘kicking like a girl’ reinforce the notion that football is a male sport, into which women who play like boys, but look like women can be admitted. In football, players are expected to be able to handle pain without complain, and women, not being ‘real’ footballers are under intense pressure to play and act strong. Thus, admitting to, or expressing, pain will in fact support the idea that women are not physically capable of playing a sport like football, and they are sensitive and weak. Women footballers are thus under tighter pressure than their male counterparts to ignore pain and discomfort, because they are constantly proving their ability and legitimacy as footballers.

The role of a coach

In any sport, at any level, coaches are figures of authority and power. For professional athletes, the power and authority of a coach reaches almost extreme levels. Through this research endeavour, I was surprised at the extent to which

coaches are given decision- making power over even the most intimate aspects of a player's life, such as body shape and size, as well as positions on the field.

In a previous section I included a quote from my interview with Linda where she told me about an occasion in which her coach told her that she was fat (read: too big) and put her under pressure to loose weight. Linda herself did not think she was fat, but clearly indicated to me that 'coach knows best' and she proceeded to loose the 'excess' weight. In telling me this story, Linda seemed to be laughing at her own ignorance concerning her weight, suggesting that even at the most intimate level of her body, her knowledge and understanding is inferior to that of her coach. Linda was laughing not because she was reprimanded by her coach for being 'fat', but because she had been foolish not to have noticed that she was, in fact, 'fat'. In this, Linda's relationship to her own body, and understanding of how her body works, was completely undermined by her coach. In my opinion, this provides an example of the ways in which elite- level sports participation can disempower women physically and also lead to an alienated physicality. In fact, the level of power exercised by a coach over women's athletic bodies are completely counter to the notion that sports participation increases bodily ownership and promotes physical empowerment. For the elite footballers I have interviewed, bodily ownership is constantly negated through the power- relationships between a coach and a player; because coaches are posited as 'experts', athletes must, at least to a certain level, succumb to their decisions and opinions.

Coaches are also placed in a position of authority when it comes to determining what makes a player talented, and thus also, which position this player should be placed in. Mbali initially started out as a defender, but as she joined a provincial student team she was asked to play midfield- a position she soon came to love. However, when she was first asked to play midfield she was surprised and uncertain; as shown in the below quotation;

"I was like 'wow, ok. This is a challenge' but I have to take it on cause coach wants me to play there, obviously there is something he sees"

Mbali says that she now thoroughly enjoys being a midfielder, although she has recently moved on to be a striker, at the request of the national team coach. Although playing in a new position may turn out to be a positive experience, the way in which 'positional' moves and changes are made again reinforce the power a coach holds over an athlete. This power relationship becomes even more intense at professional levels, where a spot on the team is never guaranteed but must constantly be earned, through performing well and abiding to the wishes of the coach. In this, players are essentially forced to accept the decisions made by their coach, if they choose not to they may be at risk of losing their spot on the team and being marked as insubordinate or ill-disciplined.

Many of the women I spoke with spoke of their coaches with great appreciation and admiration. This was especially the case for those who play in Cape Town for a female coach. Although coach remains a figure of authority and power, the Cape Town players also spoke of their coach as being supportive and understanding, and as someone that they can talk to about their life and their problems. Betty emphasised this point and said that her coach is not like other coaches- she knows about her players' problems, concerns and lives;

"I went through some stuff and she gave me help... it is better that we have somebody, not just for the soccer like most coaches; "We are here for soccer, I don't want to hear about your personal life, your love life, you are here for soccer"... It is great to know that you can talk to her about anything"

Interviewees' relationships with their coaches are clearly shaped by the personality and coaching discipline of their respective coaches, but there also seems to be a clear difference between national and provincial team coaches, and club- team coaches. Although the level of authoritative power seems to be similar, club coaches seem to be more involved with and attuned to the personal lives and needs of the players than coaches of higher- level teams. For players like Betty and Bronwyn, their coach is a source of support and she is willing to give them advice and help in any situation. The difference in personal involvement on the part of a coach may be explained, in part, by the fact that club coaches have a

more vested interested in the continued performance and dedication than what a national team coach does. While a club coach might have a very limited pool of players to choose from, a national team coach can draw players from a large pool of motivated and talented players.

The difference between the two levels of coaching can also be a result of the professionalism of playing for a national team; at this level players are expected to act as professionals and to focus their attention only on the job ahead- winning the next match. Although football clubs are also semi- professional, many coaches see their role as dual. They want to develop football talent, but they also feel that through getting more girls to play football they can help improve the lives and communities of the players involved. Monique, the coach of a well-know team in Cape Town spoke clearly what she considers her role to be;

“Nowadays you have got to be more than a soccer club... you have got to actually know what goes on at home, know how the player is doing at school, know what problems a player has, you have got to be a mother a father and everything... if you want to get the best out of that particular individual you have got to know what is going on upstairs. Say they have a problem at work or at school or at home you have got to be able to give guidance, you have got to be able to help.”

3.4 FOOTBALL AND SEXUALITY

Researching sexuality, in any context, is a complicated and difficult task; researching sexuality among women’s footballers in South Africa is no less of a challenge. Unlike the research I have done with recreational football players in South Africa, the majority of my research participants this time were unwilling to discuss personal viewpoints and experiences concerning sexuality, and I really struggled to broach this topic. This may be due to the ‘policing’ of national team players in interview settings, they are explicitly told to provide positive responses and to avoid discussing ‘politics’; but it is more likely a result of my location vis-à-vis the research participants. I did not spend a significant amount of time with many of the respondents, and my race and class location positions me as

distinctly 'other' from most of the women interviewed. Regardless of this, some aspects of sexuality were successfully discussed, and this section will provide an outline of my findings concerning football and sexuality. Due to the shortcomings of this research, I will focus mostly on issues relating to heteronormative expectations, homophobic attitudes and homophobic violence as experienced by the women footballers I interviewed.

Love, relationships and football

Few of the interviewees were willing to discuss sexuality and relationships with me, even at the level of speaking of heterosexual relationships and love. Speaking of love and relationships was however, much easier when talking to the Cape Town based players, who do not play for the national team. I spent much more time with these players than those in the national team, and the setting in which I approached interviewees and the interviews were carried out was much more informal and conversational than it was while I was at the national team camp in Pretoria. When speaking with the national team players I was speaking to them in the formal setting of being at a national team camp, and my presence there was probably understood as a journalistic venture rather than an academic research endeavour. Thus my interviews with Banyana Banyana players felt more formal and impersonal than others, and more focus was placed, by the interviewees, on their experiences in the national team as well as their hopes and dreams for the future. I believe that the 'space' we were in, while at the High Performance Centre in Pretoria, created a context in which football, not personal concerns and issues, took the front seat. This resonates with tendencies towards other attempts to separate football from the issues of daily life; I have myself had many coaches who have demanded that when I get on the football field, I need to leave my private life and problems behind.

As a result of this research setting, and the fact that I spent very little time with each of the interviewees, only two of the national team players even mentioned or indirectly referred to relationships and love. When speaking of why it is nice to

be based at the High Performance Centre, Thandeka and Babalwa stated that being in a new place they have had opportunities to meet new people and new boyfriends. Although I attempted to interrogate this further, I was not able to get them to speak more about this. An example from my interview with Babalwa and Thandeka is provided below, to highlight their refusal to speak of personal experiences or relationships with boys;

Researcher: So what is that like, leaving home to play soccer full-time?

Babalwa: Hard! You know, leaving your parents there, you leaving everyone. You get to, you meet new people from different places, different cultures.

Thandeka: New boyfriends! (laughs)

Babalwa: Aj! (laughs)

Researcher: New boyfriends?

Babalwa: Ja (laughs)

Thandeka: (laughs)

Babalwa: So you get to meet new people from new, from different places, different cultures.

Thandeka: Different languages (pauses)

It was clear to me during this exchange, that Babalwa and Thandeka were uncomfortable going into more detail with me, and they used laughter to deflect and avoid answering questions, and Babalwa also quickly changed the topic away from boyfriends.

Speaking of love and dating with the Cape Town based players was also difficult, and they would also use laughter and deflections to avoid answering questions. However, Desiree and Janine were quite open when discussing their relationships with me, interestingly enough, both these players identified themselves as lesbian. Nonetheless, they proceeded to tell me a lot about their girlfriends, as well as the nature of their relationships. Janine said that it is difficult to make time to see her girlfriend because she is always so busy with work, playing football and coaching football; and because her girlfriend does not stay in the same area as

her, she hardly ever gets to see her. Desiree, on the other hand, was receiving text messages from her ex- girlfriend during the interview and was clearly excited about going to see her straight after our interview was over. Desiree even asked my advice about how to deal with the fact that her ex- girlfriend seemed to want to get back together with Desiree;

“I was just by [with] her now, we are friends because she is dating an other girl. She wants me back though. I don’t know you know...I need advise actually!”

As a result of this, Desiree and I had a long conversation about relationships and breaking- up once our interview was over. Desiree seemed quite nervous while the voice recorder was present and switched on, but as we were leaving the café in which we had been talking, we spent a long time exchanging opinions and experiences with dating.

My conversations with both Janine and Desiree have been significant to this analysis, and because they both have had experiences with homophobia and insecurity because they are homosexual, I will present their stories more in-depth in the following sections of this chapter. However, it has to be mentioned that I was, in all the interviews, surprised at the invisibility of love and relationships. Any reference to sexuality was interpreted as being related to homosexuality, and most players presented a liberal attitude, in which they refused to accept the stereotyping of women footballers as lesbians, but also argued that peoples love lives are personal and that they would not take any foul comments to heart. Babalwa, for example, stated that;

“I mean you will hear stories always, and rumours... that is how I am, if you say ‘no, she plays soccer, she is a lesbian’ it is none of your business I mean. That is who I am I can't change that. Mina, I don’t care what people say. If I am true to who I am why should I care what other people say?”

Heteronormative expectations

Heteronormativity functions as an organizing principle in sport, and homophobia is utilised to police the appearances and appropriateness of women's bodies (Kolnes, 1995 and Griffin, 1998). Because sports have been constructed as a masculinity training ground, where boys learn to be men, women's presence in sport (and especially male dominated sports) threaten the seemingly 'natural' association of aggression, competitiveness and athleticism with men, and as a result, women athletes are stigmatised and labelled deviant so as not to threaten the 'natural' gender order (Griffin, 1998). This belief was shared by a couple of the women I interviewed. Pumla, quoted below, reiterated this idea when I asked her how she feels when other people label her as a lesbian. All the participants had experienced, on at least one occasion, being labelled as 'deviant', 'lesbian' or 'butch'. For some this took the form of people referring to them as 'boytjie' or trying to 'be like a man'. Most however, are so used to such utterances that they simply shrug them off, or refuse to take such comments seriously. As was the case with Pumla:

"They are still saying that. That all the women that are playing soccer are lesbians. Me it is like it gets in here [points to one ear] and out here [points to other ear]... I know myself I am a woman"

Although simply being a footballer is enough for accusations and suspicions of homosexuality to surface (often from people on the outside, both men and women), the labelling is also 'read' from a woman's style of dress, hairstyle and physical appearance. Because of this many of the players, when I asked them how they respond to the popular stereotype that 'football makes you lesbian', quickly turned to commenting on the way in which some women footballers choose to dress. Desiree for example, argued that women who dress 'like men' are behaving disrespectfully;

"Most of the girls actually dress up like men and they want to be seen like a man and hang the pants just like the men so that's, I would say that's no discipline"

This statement from Desiree is significant in several ways. Firstly, her reference to style of dress indicates that her 'reading' of homosexuality is based on a specific masculine performance; as such, she does not interpret accusations of lesbianism as being directed at all women footballers, but a specific 'other' type of footballer- the short haired butch lesbian. Secondly, Desiree's statement shows clearly how heteronormative expectations of feminine performances are intimately tied to notions of respectability. If a woman fails to wear a tracksuit the way it is 'supposed' to be worn by a woman, for example by wearing a cap sideways or rolling up one of the pant legs, she is regarded as being disrespectful. The normalisation of hegemonic, heterosexual femininity goes so far as to not only regulate what a sporting woman can wear, but also how she is to wear her clothes.

Monique, a previous national team player and now a coach, was very clear when explaining to me what she expects of the players in her team. Although she says that it is of no concern to her how her players dress and carry themselves when at home, she expects her players to dress and behave appropriately while in a football context. Her notion of appropriate and respectable is, as mentioned above, also tied to discourses of femininity and feminine performances. She stated that she has no problem with short hair per-se, but she does expect her players to behave as girls should:

"I always tell them that you can have short hair but you need to know how to carry yourself"

Coaches, administrators and teammates will all pass judgment on a player that is deemed to behave or dress to disrespectfully (read: masculine). The intense surveillance of footballers' femininities does not only concern how they dress, but goes so far as to regulate their body shape and overall feminine performance. Mbali, for example suggested that when people label her as a lesbian or as being manly, they do so because of her body shape, not because of her hair or how she dresses:

“I just think it is just my physique it is not the way I dress or the way I do my hair or whatever. It is your physique”

While it is acceptable to behave aggressively on the football field, women footballers are expected to be ‘gentle’ when not on the field. Monique clearly expresses this sentiment below:

“A team I watched the other day, they came down to Cape Town, like they were truly aggressive on the field, and agro, but such a gentle person off the field. They were actually very kind. Ja, but that is just the way it is, on the soccer field”

This statement reinforces notions of what is appropriate feminine behaviour, and situates feminine as something associated with ‘gentleness’ and kindness, not aggression and competitiveness.

Judgement and abuse

Only two of the women I interviewed spoke openly about homosexuality and their own sexual orientation. Desiree and Janine are both lesbian, but they do not speak openly about this at all, in their team or at home. Because they are teammates, Desiree, the younger of the two, often confides in Janine about her relationship and problems she experiences at home. Janine has kept her sexual orientation hidden from her family, but earlier this year her mother discovered that she has a girlfriend;

“She was like “You want to be like a man” [talks as if mother was screaming]. I don’t want to start with her, because I know I am going to run away from home and her and that was my whole plan, to run away from home...most of the time sometimes I think she will argue with me and be angry and I just wanna kill myself or... run away from home”

While some may not have experienced physical harassment or abuse on the basis of their assumed sexual orientation, fears of such abuse are very real, and players

are painfully aware of the need to display heterosexual markers to remain safe. As evidenced in this conversation between two national team players;

Mbali: they killing... they are raping and then they kill...

Nandipha: it becomes scary

Mbali: very scary. I mean that ja you think that you look feminine because well you just got your hair done or something like that, but you don't"

From the above it becomes clear that fear of violence and harassment has a large impact on women footballers lives in South Africa. Both Mbali and Nandipha seem to think that they are both presenting bodies that are more athletic than hegemonic femininity stipulates, and they both express fears about walking around after dark, even on the university grounds where they live. While walking about after dark is something that most South African women associate with risk, it is undoubtedly true that because both Mbali and Nandipha play for the national team they might be recognised in public as footballers. This, they fear, places them at risk of homophobic violence.

The fear of violent attacks and rape remain a very real part of lesbian women's lives in South Africa, and women footballers (lesbian or not) are not exempt from this. On the 28th of April 2008 former Banyana Banyana player Eudy Simelane was found dead not far from her parents house in Kwa Thema, Johannesburg. Eudy had been raped and subsequently stabbed 25 times. Simelane was one of very few women who lived openly as a lesbian in Kwa Thema.

Homosexuality: A silent issue

Although popular stereotypes posit all women footballers as lesbians, homosexuality remains a silent topic within women's football. There are few teams and situations in which lesbian women footballers feel comfortable with discussing their sexualities and personal relationships. While I cannot make suggestions as to the sexual orientation of all the women I interviewed, it was

nonetheless clear to me that regardless of personal preference homosexuality is spoken of in impersonal terms, only in reference to popular stereotypes or through statements such as 'you cannot tell someone who to love'. My interview with Desiree was particularly illuminating for me in this regard. When I first broached the topic of relationships and dating with Desiree, she started telling me about the problems she had had when she dated a Black boy. She said that the fact that they lived in very different areas, and because her mother would not support her dating a Black boy, led to her ending the relationship. Because Desiree is coloured I was quite interested in examining why it was not acceptable for her to date a Black boy, and asked again why her mother would not like it; however, she just responded by saying;

"Iyoh!! My mum would no be happy. My mum is looking out for me and I do not want to cause any problems between me and my mum"

Thus, I quickly understood that cross-racial relationships were not acceptable in her family, but because Desiree was not willing to go into detail, I decided to approach the topic from another angle. That was when I decided to ask the following question;

Researcher: So what do you think your mother would say if you came home with a girlfriend?

Desiree: Iyoh!!! [pauses] That is a secret now. Iyoh iyoh iyoh...Mari how can you? Ok you can...my mum found out that I was dating this girl right...We were close friends who started dating. I didn't know who told my mum...She was like 'you want to be like man' [talks as if her mother was screaming] you see, and I was, I don't want to start with her, because I know I am going to run away from home and her. That was my whole plan to run away from home... You can't tell... Like you and me we talk open right, I can't talk to her open... You know it hurts, really hurts me."

Up until I asked this question, Desiree had been telling me a heterosexual story, and a convincing one at that, but after having spoken for a while, I presume she

understood that I was someone she could 'talk open with' and decided to tell me about her lesbian relationship. This conversation was incredibly important to me, and showed me clearly the extent to which lesbian footballers 'do heterosexuality' and speak so as to be able to 'pass' as being heterosexual. Desiree's story also shows the massive invisibility and silence concerning homosexualities in South Africa; although her mother now knows that she is lesbian, Desiree does still not speak about this with her mother, like Desiree said, she does not want to cause problems between herself and her mother. In this, remaining silent about homosexuality, and successfully 'passing' as heterosexual becomes tied to ideas of respectability that further entrench the notion that homosexuality is not natural and acceptable, and that it should remain hidden and unspoken.

Only one of the participants, Janine spoke openly of homosexuality in football when she claimed that *"there is a lot of lesbians in soccer"*. Her statement may not seem surprising, but the fact remains that homosexuality in women's football is a silent issue. Because of fears of reinforcing stereotypes and giving the sport a bad name, women footballers, coaches and administrators never comment as to the extent of homosexuality in the sport. To ensure the 'good' reputation of the sport, homosexuality is hidden and players are expected to present unquestionably heterosexual bodies and appearances. Most statements regarding homosexuality are made as a part of attempts to disprove myths, and no space is left for discussing individual experiences.

Janine's statements also reinforce this idea that (homo) sexuality should remain hidden and private. Despite being open with me about her own sexual identity, she nonetheless reiterated the notion that homosexuality should remain in the private realm;

"Why are you still wearing the clothes like men's clothes and stuff like that. So, I am also lesbian, there is nothing wrong with that, but the thing is I don't show people that I am, it is my life. But others they will like show you in public that "ja, this is my girlfriend" and that is so wrong"

The above statement clearly reflects the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ philosophy that dominates women’s football in South Africa. Presenting your sexual orientation in public, through public displays of affection or through ways of dressing, is disrespectful. And because women’s football is met with homophobic attitudes, it becomes almost impossible for lesbian footballers to communicate their struggles, as them being open about their sexuality is seen as adding to the sport’s ‘bad name’ by confirming stereotypes.

3.5 WOMEN’S FOOTBALL IS STILL A RACE GAME

Although women’s football is mainly constituted by urban, Black women (Pelak, 2006:385), these women do not enjoy the same access to sporting facilities and resources as their white counterparts. As such, gender is not always the most important cause of marginalisation and exclusionary practices in sport (Burnett, 2002). One must also remember, that in the South African context, class locations are racialised and as a result the working class is mainly constituted by black South Africans, while white South Africans are largely middle- class. This means that in sporting access is dominated by the white, middle class, while the black population remains largely marginalised from resources and facilities. Because of structures of class, race and gender in South Africa it is near impossible to generalise about women’s opportunities and experiences in sport. South African women’s access to sport is not only negated by their gender, their class and race status also impact on their opportunities. This has created a situation in which female sporting role models in South Africa are almost exclusively white, supporting the notion that the South African feminine athletic is a White feminine athletic.

Racialised access

Across the world, football is considered a working class sport, and South Africa is no exception from this. Apartheid legacies have however, perpetuated a racialised class system, and as a result of this, football has become constructed as

a game for and of black men. This association of football, with blackness has a big impact on how the game is experienced also by women. Although black and coloured women do not enjoy the same access to sporting facilities and resources, they are nonetheless the key football player constituents in South Africa. At the time when I was interviewing Banyana Banyana players only one white player and two coloured players were present at the camp.

White women footballers enjoy superior opportunities for qualified coaching and formalised competition. However, due to the racialisation of football, not all white women have access to these structures. Perceptions of football as being a game for the Black working class, means that white women also experience racial obstacles to participation, for example through their schools refusing to offer football as an official school sports code. While the funds and resources might be available to make football a school sport, racist and classist ideologies of the game still bar the availability in so- called 'White' schools. In a previous research project, conducted with recreational women footballers at the University of Cape Town, I was told that when one of my interviewees, Mel, attempted to start a football team at her high school, Westerford (one of the top high schools in South Africa according to recent ratings), she was told by senior administrators that establishing a football team at the school would lead to attracting a particular unwanted (read "black, working class students) group of students to the school (Haugaa Engh, 2007). Because of language constraints and continued racial divisions it can also be difficult for White women to gain access into a Black or Coloured team; and fears over being the only white girl may also inhibit many white girls and women from taking up football. As a result, the few white women who do persist as footballers are often seen and treated as something of a novelty. Because there are so few of us White women footballers in South Africa, we are either assumed to be of American or European nationalities (which, in my case is correct); or we are so rare that we are easily accepted and treated as being 'black at heart'. In my own experience, being a white woman footballer is much less of a painful experience than it can be for other women. Middle- class discourses of equality, liberty and freedom afford ample opportunity for breaking

boundaries, and as such, transgression of hegemonic discourses exist as a middle-class privilege.

Exclusionary practices

In post- Apartheid South Africa sport has become constructed as an essential tool for nation building, reconciliation and unity (Nauright, 1997). National teams in all sporting codes are presented as representatives and products of the rainbow nation, and much public debate goes into discussing the racial composition of (male) national teams in various codes. What is seldom admitted however, is the fact that sport, as a social institution, tends to mirror and perpetuate inequalities in wider society (Griffin, 1998; Pelak, 2005). Moreover, sport can also function to uphold and support racist, sexist, classist and other discriminatory inequalities. In this, women's football is no exception.

South African society is still powerfully segregated and separate according to racial categories, and this separateness is evident also in women's football. Most teams and clubs, except perhaps at the highest level and in some university teams, are almost exclusively white or black or coloured. In fact, all clubs are understood to have a racial profile, and very few multi-racial teams exist. In Cape Town for example, there is a clear separation between 'black clubs' and 'coloured clubs', in both men's and women's football. Even if a team does include players from more than one racial group, the team will nonetheless be seen as having its history and politics deeply rooted within a specific racial context.

Within men's football, both Ajax Cape Town and Santos (the other Premier Soccer League team based in Cape Town) are seen as being coloured clubs that do not easily accommodate black players (at least this is what I have been told by Black male friends who are avid football players). In women's football, there is also a clear sense of Cape Town being the 'heart of coloured football'; although numerous so- called 'black clubs' exist. On a national level, Cape Town easily becomes constructed as a 'coloured city', leading to Cape Town based players

experiencing racial as well as geographical marginalisation. Within the greater Cape Town area, the racial politics are no less complicated than they are in other parts of South Africa. Clubs and teams are constituted according to racial divisions, and teams often compete in separate leagues also based on geo-racial politics. Because Black women dominate the sport, Coloured women often feel alienated and marginalised from competing at the highest level. These concerns are based on the relative absence of Coloured and Cape Town-based players on the national teams and in national decision-making structures. While this absence is often explained by references to a lack of funds available for scouts (and the national team administration) to travel to Cape Town to watch games, players nonetheless interpret this in racial terms. As can be seen in the below statements made by Betty and Janine;

“There is one [coloured player], you have experienced [it] yourself, one coloured [player], one white, so and the rest is African...I won’t play, really, I won’t play for my country” (Betty)

“I get there and there are new players in the team, no one coloured, I am the only one. And I think what happened to the other players from Cape Town, cause we played this week “no they are injured” eish, if they all played this week how can they be injured? And I phoned them and asked if they are injured, they are not... there is dirtiness in that team” (Janine)

Janine here suggests that the national team administration lied to her and said that the other coloured players that had previously played for the national team were injured and thus would not be coming to the next match. Janine discovered the lie when she called the players in question and they told her they were not, in fact, injured. Janine thus concluded that the selection process is fundamentally raced and that the selection team were consciously selecting only Black players. This sense of racialised marginalisation goes so far as to convince coloured players that Banyana Banyana is not, in fact, their national team; it is the black national team.

When I asked other Coloured Cape- Town based players about their experiences with racial politics in football, I received the following response from Bronwyn;

“I think there is a lot of racism... but I think basically they think Africans can play football better than Coloureds can... they like minimise our talent and stuff.”

Bronwyn here makes it clear that she sees the composition of national teams as being the result of racist attitudes; she believes that because football is seen as a black sport, coloured players are undervalued and excluded from opportunities for professional play. Bronwyn also suggested it that racial ideologies in football go so far as to read what type of player a woman is based on her race;

“We know they [Black women] want to do a lot of tricks and stuff, but that is not the point, the point is you must like call the girls there, then you can like label a player, that player plays so and that player plays so- don’t come here with your perceptions”

There seems to be a widely used stereotype in women’s football that while black women play multi- touch, entertainment- style football, coloured women play a different kind of game; resulting in widespread beliefs about exclusion and ‘stacking’ of coloured players. In essence, it seems that many coloured players (all of the coloured players I spoke to expressed similar sentiments concerning this) feel that they are denied opportunities because of their race, and they interpret the small number of coloured players in the national team as being a direct result of racist selection processes that posit Coloured women as having less valuable skills than Black women.

However, when confronted with questions about racism in her own team, Bronwyn was quick to argue that her team does not make use of the racist ideologies that other teams do. She suggests that in her own team, many cultures co-exist and she clearly stated that she sees this as a strength:

“How can I say we are like not a perfect team but a team with a lot of cultures man because we are like Christians, Muslims...it is nice to have that combination because you can learn from someone, and even if you want to learn like how to speak you can like ask”

Although Bronwyn's statements concerning the racial composition of her own team are true, I have myself spent a lot of time with her team and witnessed the multi-racial composition. Her team is, by outsiders, considered a coloured team, and because the club's home field is in a coloured area, Wynberg, and all administrative and coaching staff are coloured, this specific club will probably continue to be seen as coloured regardless of the racial composition of the actual team. This then, impedes on the potential for sport to support transformation and equality- as will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter.

University Of Cape Town

CHAPTER 6:

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RELATED LITERATURE

6.1 'PLAY LIKE A MAN', BUT LOOK LIKE A WOMAN

"We don't want many things, we just want people to be aware! That women's soccer does exist, and that there are women out there that love, like really love, soccer" (Karabo)

Across the world women's football has grown exponentially, in popular support and participation rates, since the first World Cup was organised in China in 1991 (Hong, 2004 and Cox and Thompson, 2000). In South Africa, the development of structures for women's football was late, but the arrival of SASOL as a corporate supporter of women's football in 2009 seems to signal a renewed commitment to the development of the women's game. Nonetheless, football, in South Africa, continues to be viewed as a game for men, and the game remains a flagship masculine sport, and serves to maintain and support masculine domination (Pelak, 2005). Men's football dominates 'football lingo', media coverage and participation rates, and despite the recent achievements of the women's national teams, they receive little public recognition and support. The male dominance however, goes far beyond that of monopolising corporate and popular support; the way in which the game is played, how it is talked about and how players are valued is also constructed in masculine terms. Women who play football are expected to 'play like men' but 'look like women' when entering this male domain, creating a system in which football remains understood in masculine terms, even when women are playing the game. Thus, women who play football in South Africa have to negotiate a complex terrain of masculine and feminine discourses and restrictions.

Football, like many male- dominated sports, is seen as a sport that requires a player to exhibit characteristics like aggression, strength, competitiveness and speed, qualities that in hegemonic heteronormative discourses have become naturalised as bona- fide male qualities (Lenskyj, 1990 and Kolnes, 1995). Many women who play football are met with scepticism and hostility, their identity as footballers is seen to signal a lack of femininity *“based on a fallacious logic positing that women who cross socially constructed gender demarcations, by playing a sport that has historically been dominated by men, must somehow be ‘pseudo men’ defined in sexual terms”* (Cox and Thompson, 2001:7). Because football is seen as a sport that is natural for men, and not for women, many women who play football are seen by outsiders as being different and deviant, and many position themselves as being different from ‘other’ women as an explanation for why they play football. Several of the women in this study did this through labelling themselves as having been ‘tomboys’ while growing up. In this, they are constructing themselves as being different from ‘other girls’, or not being typical. This does not however, mean that the women who self-identity as tomboys (currently or previously) do so with shame, but many seem to use it in order to explain why they came to love, and be so good at, a game like football, a game for men. Tomboy is label that many women bear with pride; I also used to do that. By calling myself a tomboy, I saw myself from being different from other, and in my mind, boring girls who did not play football. Being a tomboy and a footballer meant that I was seen as tough, unconventional and active. Ezzel (2009) refers to this process as ‘defensive othering’ and suggests that it is used by oppressed groups of people as a coping strategy through taking on and supporting the values, norms and attitudes of the dominant group. This defensive othering reinforces the *“power of stigmatizing labels by arguing that the label is true for other members of their social category, but not for themselves”* (Ezzel, 2009:114). The use of ‘tomboy’ as a self- identification perpetuates the notion that normal/typical women do not play and enjoy football, and as a result lends support that football requires one to be ‘like a man’. Scraton, Fasting, Pfister and Bunuel Heras argue that *“by perceiving themselves to be ‘like boys’ they reinforce*

and reproduce, rather than challenge, the power relations between male/female and the binary oppositions of masculine/feminine and men's sport/women's sport" (1999: 105). Rather than challenging the notion that football is for men, women who label themselves as tomboys reproduce the belief that women are not natural athletes and footballers, and thus reconstruct football as male game.

The perception of football as a male game is also sustained through the belief that while men play football, women merely 'kick the ball around', which constitutes women's football as a less valuable alternative to the men's game (Pelak, 2005). These ideas were reiterated by a few of the women in this study, for example by Linda when she said to me that playing football at the High Performance Centre in Pretoria was *"more like playing with boys"*. In this Linda suggests that in order to be a good footballer, a woman has to 'play like a man'. 'Playing like a man' is often used as a way of complimenting a woman's skill on the field, and I have often heard such comments from male spectators watching a women's football game. Michael Messner claims that such compliments are like a double-edged sword, it is *"a compliment to an individual woman's skills, but it also suggests that since she is so good, she must not be a true woman after all"* (Messner, 1988:205). Such comments not only suggest that women who play football well are not 'real' or 'normal' women, they also posit that only men can play football well.

Women footballers in South Africa are located within a complex ideological terrain, in which they are expected to perform femininity and masculinity simultaneously in certain ways in order to achieve acceptance and acknowledgement. Although football is perpetuated as a masculine sport, women who play it clearly show that the gendering of the sport is not based on proven biological facts, but on a particular patriarchal ideology. In this, the gendering of football is fluid; the idea of 'playing like a man' seems to suggest that only men can play football well, but, at least in the context of this research, 'playing like a man' is used in reference to skill level, not to gender. Put differently, women can, and do, 'play like men'. In fact, they must play like men and 'do' masculinity in

order to be taken seriously as footballers. This challenges the notion that men are naturally better at football than women, and shows clearly the fluidity and constructedness of masculinity and femininity.

On the other hand, women footballers must also prove their womanhood and 'do' femininity in specific ways to be accepted and acknowledged. In terms of clothing, hairstyle, body shape and size, mannerisms and sexuality women footballers must prove their adherence to the 'heterosexual matrix' (Butler, 1990). This means that women footballers, while 'playing like men', must 'look like women'. Looking like a woman entails marking the body as heterosexually feminine and involves ways of dressing, moving, training and speaking. Moreover, a woman footballer should be heterosexy, or, put differently, a woman who plays football must make sure that her appearance is appealing and attractive to the heterosexual male gaze. Femininity however, while being clearly visible to those watching, must not be exaggerated. Women footballers must not be too feminine; if she is too feminine she is seen as being incapable of performing masculinity appropriately on the field through playing 'like a man' and she is frequently assumed to be 'scared to kick the ball' (Kolnes, 1995). Being too masculine, on the other hand, is seen to signal deviant sexuality and a lack of femininity and thus posits her as pseudo- woman/lesbian (Cox and Thompson, 2001). Put differently, women footballers that are 'too masculine' are frequently assumed not to be real women, and women footballers that are 'too feminine' are assumed not to be real footballers. In essence then, women footballers are expected to 'do' just the right amount of playing 'like a man', while looking like a woman.

In a South African context football is not only a gendered sport, it also a raced sport; the game has come to be an important symbol of Black masculinities in South Africa (Alegi, 2004). Because football has become socially constructed as a Black game, ideas that suggest Black men are naturally more capable and skilled at the game than White men have also become prevalent, and it is not uncommon for South African football fans to suggest that White people (read: men) cannot

play football. These beliefs have an impact also on how women's football is understood; because football is a game for Black people, Black women are seen to possess natural skills and talents that White and Coloured women do not. Pelak has suggested that the construction of football as a Black game has a particular cause, and that it serves to uphold racialised notions of sport; *"Discursive constructions of women's soccer as a 'Black game' is consistent with the dominant view of who 'owns' soccer in the country and demonstrates that the dismantling of Apartheid has not meant the deconstruction of essentialist notions of race"* (Pelak, 2010:69). In her own research, Pelak (2010) found a tendency among her participants to construct Black women as possessing 'natural' skills and talents for football, thus reinforcing football as a 'Black game'. Pelak (2010) found that her interviewees argued that White women started quitting football in the 1980s and 1990s because they 'realised' that they were not good enough to compete with the natural talent of Black women and girls. While Black women possess skills, Coloured women are valorised for their courage and 'heart' on the field (Pelak, 2010). The following quote from one of Pelak's (2010) interviews is particularly illuminating of this point;

"Lots of the White players don't have the natural talent the Black players have. I suppose they've [Whites] come to realize that, 'hey, I'm not going to make it in this sport any more'. And you get the Black players – they've got fantastic talent ... Like our national coach always said, the Blacks [Africans] might have the natural talent, but the Coloureds play from their hearts"
(Pelak, 2010:69)

The racial constructions of football thus posit Black women as more 'natural' footballers than White and Coloured women, and thus suggests that it is easier for Black South African women to access legitimate subjectivities as footballer, their participation is seen as more natural, despite the fact that they are women. For Coloured women this serves as further marginalization from 'Blackness', and continues to posit them as 'in-between' not wholly Black, but also not White. As a result, Coloured women feel marginalised from the institutional core of football, and as this thesis has shown, they do not feel that they are given the same opportunities as Black players. In this, women's football is not all that different

from other South African sports, racial stereotyping and informal segregation still exists, although legal frameworks and official discourses attempt to posit sport as a unifying force. The production of football as a 'raced' game also impacts on women's possibilities for taking up subject positions within the game, but although Black women are more easily recognised as legitimate footballers, the feminine expectations placed on them serves to make this acceptance highly contested, as will be shown in the next section of this chapter.

6.2 CONSTRUCTING A FEMININE ATHLETIC

"Bodies are politically symbolic arenas in which fierce ideological debates about natural male physical superiority and female inferiority are played out" (Dworkin, 2001:345).

The first thing evident to me from this research project is that my assumption of a 'split' between gendered- body experiences and sporting- body experiences was erroneous, or misplaced. I had initially imagined that while on the football field (or on other fields of sport and physical activity) women can find spaces of freedom, where discourses of heteronormative femininity do not restrict the way on which bodies are experienced and embodied. I had imagined, drawing on my own experiences, that there exists spaces where all that exists is the sporting body. However, my research has shown that for women, the construction of an athletic, sporting body is simultaneously regulated by restrictions of heteronormative, heterosexuality and feminine ideals. As a result, women athletes become victims to a regulatory scheme that male athletes do not. Because women are not seen as 'natural' athletes, limitations need to be placed on their athletic potentials and bodies so as to reinforce a gendered hierarchy based on beliefs about the 'natural' differences between male and female bodies.

Doing professional sports involves a large degree of discipline; discipline in the sense of enforcing a habit intense training and physical exercise, but also discipline in the sense of controlling, forcing and regulating the body to abide by a

specific set of rules and norms associated with being a professional athlete. Failure to adhere to these disciplinary requirements and regimes is punishable behaviour. For women athletes these disciplinary regimes entail a process of shaping and constructing an athletic, fit and strong body, but as this discussion will show, also involve processes of regulating the athleticism of the body in order for it to remain a fundamentally feminine body. Marking the female athletic body as feminine is a product of heteronormative beliefs about the capacities and so-called 'natural' characteristics of male and female bodies that endorses a system of masculine domination and female inferiority (Dworkin, 2001).

The feminine athletic

Because athleticism, muscle tone and mass are not easily compatible with hegemonic, heteronormative femininity, but rather seen as 'natural' aspects of manhood and masculinity, female athleticism is a complex and contested terrain (Messner, 1988). Caudwell argues that sports *"epitomizes sexual differentiation... in fact, most sport is premised on dimorphic sex and the notion of sex difference is natural, stable and fixed"* (Caudwell, 2003:384). This, she argues, legitimises certain types of sporting bodies while excluding others, thus effectively creating a system of compulsory heterosexuality where female athletes must clearly mark their bodies as feminine to gain legitimacy (Caudwell, 2003). Through her research on women football players in England, Caudwell shows how women police and regulate their bodies and appearance to comply effectively with this compulsory order of *"woman-feminine-heterosexual"* (Caudwell, 2003:385).

My research has also highlighted the ways in which women footballers discipline their bodies as feminine bodies, through a particular combination of hairstyle, clothing, training and eating. The most commonly discussed and analysed markers of femininity are hairstyle and clothing; and as my analysis showed, women footballers both reinforce and challenge ideas concerning appropriate femininity through their dress and hair. Some players objected to the image of a feminine

footballer being long-haired and dressed in a body-hugging or tight football kit by saying that women do not have to have long hair, while others expressed concerns over the lack of feminine football kits in women's football in South Africa. Debates concerning women's football kits are complex and highlight the numerous positions women take up within the heterosexual matrix. Some of the women I interviewed maintained that they would prefer to play in a kit that is designed for women, a kit that shows that the player is a woman because it is tight and accentuates female breasts and buttocks, but also a kit that fits the female body better. I find this debate concerning kits both interesting and difficult. A football kit that is especially designed for women signals and acknowledgement of women as footballers and makes allowances for women's needs through providing sports clothing that is sized and shaped for a female body. However, women's kits, because they tend to accentuate the erotic appeal of women's sporting bodies, draws attention away from the athletic capacity of the female body; and perpetuates the notion that women athletes are valued for their appearances, not their achievements. As such, I see the emergence of women's football kits as a complex negotiation between acknowledging women's needs and a commoditisation of women's bodies.

A similar process of negotiation appears in relation the physical discipline exerted over the female footballer's body. This research has shown that although professional footballers are required to do both cardiovascular and weight training to equip their bodies with strength, endurance and fitness for necessary for professional football, they also see these training processes as impacting on the femininity of their bodies, and as a result, often limit and restrict the kind and amount of weight training they do. Dworkin (2001) refers to this as a "*glass ceiling on women's muscular strength*", and argues that through limiting their weight training, women athletes adhere to the "*most recent form of docile bodily self-surveillance that aids patriarchal capitalism through the suggestion that bodies need to be increasingly industrious*" (Dworkin, 2001:334). As a result, women's physical empowerment through sport is obstructed through a continue emphasis on constructions of female bodies as distinctly different from male bodies.

Engagements with this 'glass ceiling' however, are complex and clearly show the ideological underpinnings of binary discourses of femininity/masculinity and ideas that women are biologically different from men. A feminine athletic body is constructed as 'naturally' being curved, slender and fit, and emphasis is placed on not increasing *"body size from fat or muscular bulk"* (Dworkin, 2001:340), this does not, however, mean that the female body is incapable of becoming too big/muscular. Some of the women in this project maintained that women's bodies are naturally smaller than men's by saying that they want to maintain their 'normal' muscles and that it is impossible for a woman to be fitter than boys. Nonetheless, women can become too big and muscular, unless they pay close attention to how their body responds to weight training. In this, there appears a *"tension between what they thought their bodies should do and knowledge of what their bodies actually do"* (Dworkin, 2001:339). Mbali highlighted this point to me when she said that *"I bulk up a lot. So what I basically do I just tone up or just have a little bit of strength"*. Here, Mbali shows the way the glass- ceiling impacts on women's relationships with muscle mass and weight training, through regulating their training.

What is interesting is that despite the awareness that their bodies can gain a lot of muscle several of the participants reinforced the notion that muscle size and bulk are male qualities. Mbali, for example, said that women's sporting bodies *"are bound to adopt like a male structure"*. The muscular female body is thus defined as deviant, even if it disproves the myth that women's bodies are naturally smaller and less muscular than men's. This then serves to maintain masculine domination. As Dworkin succinctly puts it;

"if men are free to pack on thick layers of muscle while women carefully negotiate the upper limits of their muscle gains, this symbolizes the gendered nuances of everyday power and privilege...and also highlights the construction of sexed materiality itself" (Dworkin, 2001:346).

The feminine athletic then, is not the result of natural processes and characteristics but a result of strict regulatory regimes that continue to situate the

female body as inferior, in strength and size, to the male body. The insistence on marking female sporting bodies as distinctly different from male bodies perpetuates the notion that women are not real/natural athletes, and that their engagements with sport and physical exercise are fundamentally structured around emphasised, hegemonic femininity that requires the female body to be heterosexually attractive.

The body- beautiful

The insistence on marking the female athletic body as ultimately a feminine body, reinforces a patriarchal ideology of gendered bodies, through the continued maintenance of a feminine body-beautiful regime (Maguire and Mansfield, 1998). It reinforces the tendency of valuing women for what they look like, rather than what they achieve, and, as Craig (2006:162) notes *“the feelings of inadequacy produced by the presence of beauty standards in women’s lives are, arguably, among the most personal manifestations of gender inequality in our lives”*. The body-beautiful regime is, however *“is constructed within a White, heterosexual, and class-based structure”*, and thus posits the ideal feminine body as being White, middle-class, slender, toned and heterosexual (Krane Choi, Baird, Aimar and Kauer, 2004:316). This narrow definition marginalised Black, Queer and disabled bodies from hegemonic notions of femininity, and continues to render these bodily experiences invisible.

In South Africa, the invisibility of Black women’s athleticism is a result of the neglect to examine and realise the intersections of raced, classed and gendered experiences. According to Cynthia Pelak the separation of *“ race and gender transformation ignores the barriers facing Black women in sport and renders their experiences invisible. Such conceptualization constructs Black men’s experiences as the standard and women’s experiences, which are not understood as racialized, as secondary. The prioritization of racial transformation over gender transformation means that the inequalities facing Black women, who are the majority of the South African population, are subordinated to the inequalities facing Black men”* (Pelak,

2006:379). As a result of this, Black women's athletes experiences in South Africa, are not examined as raced experiences, as White women's experiences are assumed to 'speak' for all South African women. This fact is further enabled through the relative lack of Black female sporting role models in South Africa. The most well-known and recognised female athletes, apart from Caster Semenya, are all white and mostly middle- class (Burnett, 2002).

The invisibility of Black women's sporting bodies and femininities is also perpetuated through the tendency to dichotomise Black South African femininity as wholly different from white, western femininities; Black women's femininity is often posited as a traditional, curvy and maternal ideal that seemingly excludes the possibility of a Black athletic femininity. In fact, it has only been in the past few decades that Black women's bodies have appeared as slim and long-legged and 'fashionable' in the South African media, and few images of Black women athletes are visible. Due to racist constructions of hegemonic femininity, Black women are "*typically stereotyped as more 'masculine' than white women*" (Ezzel, 2009:119) as Black 'unruly' hair and skin tone is seemingly incompatible with the Westernised, White, feminine athletic. This, coupled with notions of Black people's natural physical superiority in certain sports, functions to instil further regulatory regimes over the Black female body as she is required to soften and straighten her hair, 'bleach' her skin and control her weight training to appear feminine enough. However, Black women footballers in South Africa live within a complex set of discourses about their sporting participation. On the one hand their participation in football is seen as more natural than that of White and Coloured women, while on the other hand their Black bodies are 'other' to the fit, White, blonde and heterosexy ideal that legitimises athleticism in women.

None of my respondents made reference to a specific African or 'Black' femininity, probably because of my inability to interrogate this point, but also because my Whiteness posits me as outside of these concerns. However, the invisibility of alternative discourses of femininity and notions of African femininity might also signal how Black women footballers make use of hegemonic

constructions of the feminine athletic in order to explain and carve legitimate spaces for their own bodies. By drawing on aesthetic femininity as constructed through the feminine athletic, muscle- mass and an athletic appearance is not only acceptable but admirable and attractive. If the women that participated in this research have previously engaged with notions of femininity that draw on aspects of African ‘figures’, respectability and motherhood, the silencing of these ideologies in my interviews with them shows how they have chosen to draw on discourses that legitimise sporting subjectivities in order to create athletic freedom. Put differently, if African notions of femininity do not allow for professional athletic careers and appearances, discourses of a feminine athletic valorise the feminine athletic body and as such makes it permissible for them to be both feminine and athletic.

However, the feminine athletic, being a commoditised aesthetic is also closely linked to middle- class ideals, and essentialises the ideal feminine appearance as not only heterosexual and White, but also middle- class. The body- beautiful aesthetic envisioned through the feminine athletic requires an array of beauty practices and regimes to be performed on the body, many of which require a substantial income (for example gym memberships, beauty treatments, expensive make-up etc), and it ascribes value to the consumerist potentials of the middle class. Moreover, as Craig (2006) suggests, beauty aesthetics also signal social positioning, and aid processes of ‘othering’ and inequality. Craig (2006:166) argues that *“women negotiate a sense of self through beauty work and in relation to beauty standards, but they do so as socially located women positioning themselves in relation to socially located beauty standards”*. Associating with a feminine athletic aesthetic thus can function not only to validate and legitimise female muscularity and athleticism, but also signals upward mobility through its associations with middle- class social status. For those of my participants that were from working- class backgrounds (most of them), the use of discourses of feminine athleticism allows them space for remaining feminine while also being professional footballers. However, referring to this discourse indicates allegiance to middle- class notions of femininity, and is by many seen as distinctly different

from that which is African. Middle- class constructions of femininity do however reclaim African- ness, and I believe that through their participation, the women I interviewed are intimately involved in forging new notions of African femininity.

However, it remains clear that the body- beautiful regime instilled through hegemonic femininity (athletic or not) functions to commercialise certain kinds of women's bodies, while marginalising others. As Dworkin (2001:334) eloquently explains:

“While certain women disproportionately benefit from being physically powerful and healthy, an individualised fit body politics may be criticized as being removed from collective forms of empowerment that can challenge oppressive institutions and practices”

Dworkin (2001) here points to an important issue in the construction of an acceptable feminine athletic. While a feminine athletic legitimises a certain level of muscular strength and mass among women (not only athletes), it nonetheless reinforces patriarchal power relations through the emphasis on attractive femininity- women's value is measured according to heterosexual attractiveness and erotic appeal to the heterosexual male gaze. The notion of attractive and emphasised athletic femininity also re-constructs the White, blonde and blue-eyed female body as the ideal; and thus also legitimises the athleticism of White women. Black women athletes, due to racists discourses of the physical superiority, masculinity and sexing of Black women's bodies, continues to mark the Black female body as 'other'.

6.3 SPORT, EMPOWERMENT AND EQUALITY

“Many view today's fit woman as embodying power and agency in a manner that challenges definitions of women as weak passive, or docile” (Dworkin, 2001:334).

The emergence of a feminine athletic in the past decade has undoubtedly served to make women's sporting achievements more visible and acceptable. For sporting women, the emergence of fit-femininity in popular and mainstream

media has provided much needed recognition and affirmation of women's sporting bodies and identities. Reflecting on this, Heywood and Dworkin, for example state that; *"After years of the self- doubt that comes with invisibility, we were valued by the culture that had previously ignored us"*. (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003:3).

The establishment of new markets for women's sports consumption has been incredibly important in legitimising women's sports participation, and while only 20 or so years ago sporting women were stereotyped as butch, manly, lesbians, it is not possible for women to be serious and accomplished athletes without being labelled as 'sexual' deviants. While it remains true that 'men are supposed to have more, and bigger, muscles than women', the image of the physically strong, powerful and muscular female body has become a part of the fashion industry and of feminine body ideals. In addition to affirming and acknowledging women's sporting identities, this move has also enabled more women to benefit from the physical and health benefits of sport and physical activity. This resonates with claims made by sport-in-development discourse as to the emancipatory potentials of sports participation for girls and women. The International Working Group for Sport for Development and Peace, for example, has suggested that *"Sport participation leads to increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and enhanced sense of control over one's body"* (Sport for Development and Peace, International Working Group, 2008: 10). McDermott (2000) argues that one of the most striking ways in which physical activity can 'empower' women physically is through providing opportunities for women to experience their bodies physically, through physical work. Clearly, learning and developing new skills carries with it a sense of achievement and empowerment (Garrett, 2004), but McDermott (2000) adds to this by arguing that because most women experience their bodies through appearance- related concerns, physical activity offers a space where experiences of the physical body 'at work' can serve to free and liberate women from the feminine body ideal and discourses concerning femininity. She suggests that the *"potentially empowering consequence of physical activity...is to broaden their [women's] understanding of the multiple ways, beyond appearance, in which they*

can physically experience themselves” (McDermott, 2000: 356). This serves as an important counter-weight to hegemonic discourses that define the female body through a heterosexual, male gaze.

For me, this is where the emancipatory potential of sport and physical activity is particularly evident; and I can relate to Karabo’s sense of joy experienced when engaging in sport and physical activity.

“I don’t care what people think of me, cause if I love myself, I love myself the way I am. I mean I go train, at the gym, and I pump!...I will take my dumbbells, DO shoulder press, I DON’T CARE! I will pump! And afterwards you can tell that they are looking at me like “shit, what is she doing?” and I don’t care. As long as I do something that makes me happy”

Sadly, I can also relate to the experience of people (mostly me) looking at you when you enter the male/weight room in a gym and start to lift ‘men’s’ weights (dumbbells and barbells). I keep going back to this room, because I enjoy the feeling up pushing my muscles to their maximum and pushing myself to do ‘just one more set’ even though my muscles are screaming for a pause. Because of the blatant stares and gazes I receive while doing this, I often also feel like I have to have an explanation for being there; somehow saying ‘I just like it’ seems not to be enough. While it is ‘ok’ for women to lift some light and small weights, a woman who lifts ‘like a man’ (heavy weights and many repetitions) is seen as being too transgressive, too powerful. Karabo herself acknowledges the ‘deviance’ of how she trains, and she is aware that lifting heavy dumbbells is not something that women do, and she does in fact, apologise for this behaviour though she refuses to stop. The feminine apologetic is common among women in male dominated institutions (see for example Broad, 2001; Griffin, 1992 and Messner 2002) and it functions to make women emphasise “*other conventional aspects of gender presentation and performance*” (Ezzel, 2009:112).

The feminine athletic thus, while legitimising sporting women, nonetheless reconstitutes a heteronormative, patriarchal representation of ideal femininity, and women athletes as a result are engaging in complex processes of marking

their bodies as heterosexy- fit (Ezzel, 2009). I argue that for women, sports participation does not offer real empowerment or transformation when 'old' regimes of control are simply replaced by new ones; for example, while traditional feminine ideals did not accept muscularity in women, this is now acceptable, but only to a certain extent. The heterosexy-fit ideal thus reinforces the White, middle- class female body as the standard of femininity. It essentially *"simultaneously creates 'new' womanhood as it re- creates 'true' womanhood"* (Dworkin, 2001:347). As such, the acceptable feminine athletic, is no less feminine than the non- athletic body, femininity is still a necessary element and a standard against women's bodies are measured.

Professional sports participation can also dis- empower women through the insistence of strict regulatory regimes of training, weight control and discipline. The pressures of elite and professional sports create a situation whereby 'coping' with pain and injury is an integral part of participation, as it is seen as inevitable to achieving success (Theberge, 2008). Through disciplining the body in line with discourses of elite sport and athleticism, many athletes come to treat, and perhaps experience, their bodies as machines for success (Zakus, 1995). In this, the body becomes a mechanical object to be disciplined and controlled; often at the risk of permanent injury and illness.

All the women I interviewed for this thesis play (or have played) football at an elite- level in South Africa, as elite athletes they have over a period of many years become accustomed to a strict and intense training regime. However, clear differences were visible among the participants as to the number of training sessions they would take part in each week. Those who trained the most were the young girls living at the High Performance Centre in Pretoria, probably because they are part of a formal football academy and because a wide array of sports facilities are available at the HPC. At the HPC girls as young as 15 are made to train twice a day for 2 or more hours, at least 4 days a week; although they are allowed to skip planned training sessions should they feel too tired, 'skipping' training often means that instead of training with the other girls on the football field the

girls are expected to go the gym and do some 'light' cardiovascular training, like cycling. When speaking of this both Thandeka and Babalwa presented this as a natural, common-sense procedure; showing the extent to which daily training sessions are considered an absolute requirement for elite sports participation. While this may be true, it nonetheless shows how internalised and naturalised training regimes and requirements become for these women footballers. Although Thandeka said that she 'used to cry a lot' after first arriving at the HPC because she was so tired all the time, she has now become used to the amount of training they have to do, and does not raise any questions about the effects of this strict disciplinary regime. Moreover, Thandeka and Babalwa both indicated to me that they themselves have very little say as to the number of training sessions and the type of training they take part in while at the HPC, indicating that the women living at the HPC are expected to follow a training regime that they have had no role in designing or planning.

The strict and controlled environment that many elite women footballers exist within can thus dis-empower women because it constructs a situation where the women themselves do not have control over their bodies. As coaches decide where on the field a player should play, how often she should train, what kind of training she should do, what she should eat, how much she should weigh and, essentially, what her body should look like, women do not control their own elite-sports participation. Refusing to follow 'coaches' orders' can result in being dropped from the team. Because of the male domination of football, most women footballers in South Africa play under male-coaches, thus adding a clear gendered element to the power relations that are at play between athletes and their coaches. This male control of women's athletic experiences is not particular to South Africa, nor to football, as Birrell and Theberge state; *"Increasingly in the past 20 years... men have been accepted as legitimate organizers of women's sport experiences, telling us how to play, when to play, where to play, and how to train our bodies"* (Birrell and Theberge, 1994:345). This is not to say that women footballers in South Africa are powerless when it comes to controlling and shaping their sporting experiences, but the gendered nature of the athlete/coach

reinforces ideas of men as natural athletes and sports experts, while also enabling patriarchal control to be exerted over young women. Due to notions of respect and seniority common in South Africa young women footballers might thus encounter culturally defined patriarchal obstacles to speaking- up or disagreeing with their male football coaches. This is a particularly important point to consider and research further as sexual harassment in sport is not only prevalent; *“a study from Norway among all the elite level female athletes that found that 29% had experienced sexual harassment from someone in sport”* (Fasting, 2004:1); but also because of the specific relationship that exists between an athlete and a coach; *“the relationship between a coach and an athlete is critical for the success of the team”* (Volkwein, Schnell, Sherwood and Livezey, 1997:285).

Women’s professional football in South Africa then exists as a complex space, where contradictory expectations and ideals serve to complicate women’s participation. Because football continues to be seen as a masculine game, women who enter the game are expected to perform masculinity and femininity simultaneously, in very particular ways. While notions of a feminine athletic has gained credence in the global North during the past decade, but has not yet become fully mainstreamed and acceptable in a South African context. As a result, women footballers turn to Northern- based, class and race based constructions of female athleticism to legitimise and shape their own bodily experiences. While this allows for some acceptance of Black sporting femininities in South Africa, the fact remains that Black women in particular are treading a fine line between acceptability and deviance by appearing athletic and ‘sporty’ in public. The recent controversy surrounding Caster Semenya shows that the regulatory schemes that surround Black women’s femininities is much less accepting of muscle mass and emphasised muscularity than what liberal, middle-class constructions of White femininity are, and notions of African-ness and Black-ness continue to posit the Black female body as a threat to normative, heterosexual femininity.

CONCLUSION

The Northern- based feminist theories outlined at the beginning of this thesis, have supported my analysis and theorising about women's experiences in professional football in South Africa. They have provided me with a theoretical framework through which to examine the ambivalent and tense relationship between surveillance and empowerment in women's sporting experiences. As such, this thesis shows clearly the theoretical journey I have undertaken while researching women's football in South Africa. I started this journey, four years ago, with a naïve understanding of sport rooted in "Just Do It" discourses and images, but as my research extended, so to did my understanding and theorising. This thesis is the culmination of my academic work thus far, but I aim to make further contributions to this much under- researched field. I am especially concerned with doing contextual research, and I hope that what I present here will spark further interest and debate.

It has become painfully evident that when women do sports, and particularly when they do 'male' sports, meanings of femininity are exacerbated. Because women's participation in a sport like football is considered a transgression, there is a heightened need to mark women's bodies as feminine, so as to reinforce the heteronormative and dichotomous constructions of male/female and masculine/feminine. Women in sport are expected to 'make up for' the masculine aspects of their appearances and behaviours through marking their bodies in feminine ways. This signals a crude understanding of gender as a natural and inevitable consequence of sexing, and functions to naturalise highly political gendered ideologies. However, this thesis has also shown that the emergence of a feminine athletic in the past decade has been crucial in validating women's athletic subjectivities. Through an increased acceptance of muscularity and activity women have gained legitimate access to sporting realms, and the assumed contradiction between femininity and athleticism has proven less rigid than feminists previously argued.

However, this thesis has shown that the empowerment and transformation sport has the potential to offer women should not be assumed to follow directly from participation. Women's access to sports participation and sporting subjectivities is stratified, and a complex and ambivalent relationship exists between empowerment and surveillance. This thesis argues that this tense relationship is particularly evident in analyses of gender/race/class intersections, heteronormativity and through examining women's participation at a professional level.

Although South African women, in general, are marginalised from sports participation through gendered divisions of labour, material and ideological constraints, their experiences should not be represented as homogenous. Women's class and race locations impact on access to sports resources and facilities but also complicate their relationships to the feminine athletic. Because the feminine athletic as it has been represented over the last decade validates White, middle- class femininities, 'Black' hair, skin tones and body shapes are re-inscribed with notions of masculinity and 'otherness'. In this, Black and Coloured women face different forms of surveillance than their White counterparts, as their hair and skin tones require more 'work' and regulation. Moreover, racial constructions of physical bodies are perpetuated through sports, and sport can serve to validate racist stereotypes and perpetuate racial segregation. The racial composition of South African class structures also impedes on sporting empowerment through the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. The dominance of images of white, heterosexual and middle- class athletic femininities also silences and makes invisible other raced and classed experiences. Race, class and gender are not simple concepts, but complicate the meanings of femininity, and negotiations of feminine discourses.

Heteronormative ideologies are a key in regulating athletic femininities, and posit a situation where femininity is possibly only if it is heterosexual, and where heterosexuality becomes code for femininity (Kolnes, 1995). Women's

appearances are regulated in response to a male gaze, and the feminine athletic is acceptable so long as it is considered sexually attractive to men. This reinforces the objectification of women's (sporting) bodies, and represents women's achievements as secondary to their appearances- thus lending support to notions of male superiority. In fact, the feminine aesthetic and body- beautiful regime are so fundamental to heteronormative beliefs that they create a 'glass ceiling' on women's strength and physical power (Dworkin, 2001). Although the women in this study become aware that it is possible for women to 'be like men', they nonetheless restrict their own physical development so as to appear appropriate, respectable and feminine. For me, this raises questions about men's 'natural' physical superiority and should be seen as one of the ways in which social constructions of gendered bodies become naturalised. Heteronormativity plays a significant part in structuring beliefs about appearances, but it also naturalises heterosexuality. As a result, homosexuality is a silent issue within sports, and South African women athletes have to perform heterosexuality in order to maintain their positions.

This thesis has been particularly vocal as to the need to draw a distinction between women's recreational and professional sports experiences. Because of the visibility that comes with being a professional athlete, elite- level South African women footballers experience (feminine) surveillance more intimately than those who play football on a recreational basis. The national women's football team are faced with the responsibility of 'disproving' crude stereotypes, and are expected to appear as feminine role- models and football representatives. Moreover, professional level coaches are afforded intimate control and decision-making power over their athletes, and have the opportunity to regulate not only dietary and training regimens, but also off- the- field appearances and behaviours. In a South African context, professional sports are viewed as an avenue for personal improvement and upward mobility, due to a lack of generalised educational and employment opportunities. Although women's football in South Africa is not yet fully professional, this means that for many women, football is a door- opener that can facilitate improved living standards

for an extended family. Huge pressure is placed on young women be disciplined and dedicated, creating a situation where pain, injuries and abuse can become a natural part of their existence. In this context, surveillance is omnipresent, and empowerment is constructed in monetary terms.

Women's experiences in professional football thus need to be understood as grounded in a complex terrain of discourses concerning athleticism, femininity, masculinity and heterosexuality. A terrain that is complicated through women's race and class locations. This thesis has shown that while Northern theories of embodiment, empowerment and surveillance provide a useful theoretical framework for analysis, it is essential to also take seriously the particularities of a South African context. Moreover, this thesis also illuminates the need to draw a distinction between recreational and professional sports participation when writing about women's sporting lives in South Africa. Although the neo-liberal feminine athletic validates sporting subjectivities and offers women in elite-level South African football an arena for physical expression and freedom, this empowerment is deeply embedded within the regulatory schemes produced through constructions of a heteronormative feminine aesthetic.

APPENDIX A: REFERENCE LIST

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APPENDIX B: BASIC INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- When did you first start playing football?
- How did you family and friends feel about your playing?
- What other sports were you involved in?
- Why do you think you enjoy playing football so much?
- What teams and clubs have you played for?
- Were there many girls in these teams?
- When did you first realise that you were talented?
- Did you dream of playing for the national team one day?
- When did you play for the national team for the first time?
- Do you have a 'best moment' so far in your career?
- What would you say has been the worst moment so far?
- What is your favourite thing about being on the football field?
- How much and how often do you train?
- What kind of training do you do, and which do you prefer?
- Some people say that girls and women should not lift weight because their muscles will get too big. How do you feel about this?
- Who designs your training programme?
- Is your coach strict about what you eat and your weight?
- How does football impact on your health?
- Have you ever been injured?
- Have you ever played while being injured?
- What does a typical/normal day look like for you? What do you do?
- Do you have a superstitious 'thing' that you do in preparation for a match?
- What do you think when people say that women footballers are all butch, manly lesbians?
- What do you think about people who say that women footballers are not feminine enough?
- Do people ever say to you that you must be more feminine?

- What advise would you give to a young girl who wants to play for the national team one day?
- Do you ever feel like quitting football? When and why?
- What do you think makes you a good player?
- How important has football been in your life?

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